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Regional Oral History Office

Earl Warren Oral History Project

C. L. Dellums

INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE
BROTHERHOOD OF SLEEPING CAR PORTERS
AND CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER

With an Introduction by
Tarea Hall Pittman

An Interview Conducted by
Joyce Henderson

Copy No. _____



C. L. Dellums
1964

December 9, 1989

C. L. Dellums

Labor leader and civil rights campaigner C. L. Dellums died yesterday after suffering a heart attack in Oakland. He was 89.

Mr. Dellums, uncle of Democratic Representative Ronald V. Dellums, devoted much of his life to union activities and to work in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

He was a native of Corsicana, Texas.

During the 1920s, Mr. Dellums helped A. Philip Randolph organize the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the first international union founded and led by black workers.

He was elected vice president of the union in 1929 and president in 1966.

His labor movement activities led to his appointment in 1959 to California's first Fair Employment Practices Commission. He served for 26 years.

Long active in civil rights, Mr. Dellums became the first West Coast Regional Director of the NAACP in 1948.

In 1984, he was honored by the Northern California chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union during its 50th anniversary celebration in San Francisco.

For the past 61 years, Mr. Dellums lived in a modest West Oakland home. He is survived by a daughter, Marva Dellums, of Oakland, and several grandchildren.

Oakland Mayor Lionel Wilson said he was inspired by Mr. Dellums. "He was truly one of the great pioneers in the civil rights movement, not only a local leader but a national leader," Wilson said. "He was also a friend of mine whom I respected greatly and was privileged to work with as a young lawyer in the NAACP." Funeral arrangements are pending.

December 12, 1989

C. L. Dellums

AS A LEADER in two long, and ultimately successful, struggles for civil rights, C. L. Dellums learned that victory did not come easily. He was fired from his \$2-a-day job with the Pullman Co. when he joined A. Philip Randolph as a founder of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in the 1920s, a time when black unions were not recognized by management or organized labor.

Dellums, who succeeded Randolph as president of the union, found it took even greater persistence to win his 14-year campaign to establish a Fair Employment Practices Commission in California. He recalled that Governor Earl Warren refused to see him ("If I could have done so," Dellums said, "I'd have made the worst mistake in life. I'd have kept him off the Supreme Court").

GOVERNOR PAT BROWN appointed Dellums to the commission when it was established in 1959; he was reappointed by Governors Ronald Reagan and Jerry Brown. He was also the first West Coast regional director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Dellums, who died in his home in Oakland last week at the age of 89, was a man of personal warmth, integrity and — perhaps surprising in such a successful fighter — great gentleness.

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The Regional Oral History Office wishes to thank the Roscoe and Margaret Oakes Foundation (1971) and the San Francisco Foundation (1971 and 1972-1973) for underwriting a unit of the Earl Warren Project entitled "Northern California Negro Political History Series", of which this interview is a part. Their financial support, which was matched by the National Endowment for the Humanities, fostered greater depth than would otherwise have been possible in documenting the careers of these persons and their struggles on behalf of minority rights.

Willa K. Baum
Department Head
Regional Oral History Office

PREFACE

The Earl Warren Oral History Project, a five-year project of the Regional Oral History Office, was inaugurated in 1969 to produce tape-recorded interviews with persons prominent in the arenas of politics, governmental administration, and criminal justice during the Warren Era in California. Focusing on the years 1925-1953, the interviews were designed not only to document the life of Chief Justice Warren but to gain new information on the social and political changes of a state in the throes of a depression, then a war, then a postwar boom.

An effort was made to document the most significant events and trends by interviews with key participants who spoke from diverse vantage points. Most were queried on the one or two topics in which they were primarily involved; a few interviewees with special continuity and breadth of experience were asked to discuss a multiplicity of subjects. While the cut-off date of the period studied was October, 1953--Earl Warren's departure for the United States Supreme Court--there was no attempt to end an interview perfunctorily when the narrator's account had to go beyond that date in order to complete the topic.

The interviews have stimulated the deposit of Warreniana in the form of papers from friends, aides, and the opposition; government documents; old movie newsreels; video tapes; and photographs. This Earl Warren collection is being added to The Bancroft Library's extensive holdings on twentieth century California politics and history.

The project has been financed by four outright grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and by gifts from local donors which were matched by the Endowment. Contributors include the former law clerks of Chief Justice Earl Warren, the Cortez Society, many long-time supporters of "the Chief," and friends and colleagues of some of the major memoirists in the project. The Roscoe and Margaret Oakes Foundation and the San Francisco Foundation have jointly sponsored the Northern California Negro Political History Series, a unit of the Earl Warren Project.

Particular thanks are due the Friends of The Bancroft Library, who were instrumental in raising local funds for matching, who served as custodian for all such funds, and who then supplemented from their own treasury all local contributions on a one-dollar-for-every-three dollars basis.

The Regional Oral History Office was established to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons prominent in the history of California and the West. The Office is under the administrative supervision of James D. Hart, Director of The Bancroft Library.

Amelia R. Fry, Director
Earl Warren Oral History Project

Willa K. Baum, Department Head
Regional Oral History Office

1 March 1973
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EARL WARREN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviews Completed by October 1973

LABOR LOOKS AT EARL WARREN. 1970

Germaine Bulcke, A Longshoreman's Observations.

Joseph Chaudet, A Printer's View.

Paul Heide, A Warehouseman's Reminiscences.

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Emily H. Huntington, A CAREER IN CONSUMER ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL INSURANCE. 1971
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Robert B. Powers, LAW ENFORCEMENT, RACE RELATIONS: 1930-60. 1971.

EARL WARREN'S BAKERSFIELD. 1971.

Maryann Ashe and Ruth Smith Henley, Earl Warren's Bakersfield.

Omar Cavins, Coming of Age in Bakersfield.

Francis Vaughan, School Days in Bakersfield.

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California Legislature.

Gordon Claycombe, The Making of a Legislative Committee Study.

John W. Cline, M.D., California Medical Association Crusade Against
Compulsory State Health Insurance.

Merrell F. Small, THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR UNDER EARL WARREN. 1972

EARL WARREN AND THE YOUTH AUTHORITY. 1972

With an introduction by Allen F. Breed, Director, California Youth
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Kenyon Scudder, Beginnings of Therapeutic Correctional Facilities.

Heman Stark, Juvenile Correctional Services and the Community.

Kenneth Beam, Community Involvement in Delinquency Prevention.

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With an introduction by Arthur H. Sherry, Professor of Law

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Judge Oliver D. Hamlin, Reminiscences about the Alameda County District Attorney's Office in the 1920's and 30's.

Mary Shaw, Perspectives of a Newspaperwoman.

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Lloyd Jester, Reminiscences of an Inspector in the District Attorney's Office.

Beverly Heinrichs, Reminiscences of a Secretary in the District Attorney's Office.

Clarence Severin, Chief Clerk in the Alameda County District Attorney's Office.

Homer R. Spence, Attorney, Legislator, and Judge.

E. A. Daly, Alameda County Political Leader and Journalist.

John Bruce, A Reporter Remembers Earl Warren.

C. L. Dellums, INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF SLEEPING CAR PORTERS AND CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER. 1973

With an introduction by Tarea Pittman

Richard Graves, THEORETICIAN, ADVOCATE, AND CANDIDATE IN CALIFORNIA STATE GOVERNMENT. 1973

Helen S. MacGregor, A CAREER IN PUBLIC SERVICE WITH EARL WARREN. 1973

With an introduction by Earl Warren

William Byron Rumford, LEGISLATOR FOR FAIR EMPLOYMENT, FAIR HOUSING, AND PUBLIC HEALTH. 1973

With an introduction by A. Wayne Amerson

Paul Schuster Taylor, CALIFORNIA SOCIAL SCIENTIST. 1973

Volume I, Education, Field Research, and Family.

With an introduction by Lawrence I. Hewes, Fellow, Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, Santa Barbara

Volume II in process.

EARL WARREN AND THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HYGIENE. 1973

Frank F. Tallman, M.D., Dynamics of Change in State Mental Institutions.

Portia Bell Hume, M.D., Mother of Community Mental Health Services.

EARL WARREN AND THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH. 1973

With an introduction by E. S. Rogers, M.D., Dean, UC School of Public Health, 1946-51.

Malcolm H. Merrill, M.D., M.P.H., A Director Reminisces.

Frank M. Stead, Environmental Pollution Control.

Henry Ongerth, Recollections of the Bureau of Sanitary Engineering.

Kent A. Zimmerman, M.D., Mental Health Concepts.

Lawrence Arnstein, Public Health Advocates and Issues.

THE GOVERNOR AND THE PUBLIC, THE PRESS, AND THE LEGISLATURE. 1973

Marguerite Gallagher, Administrative Procedures in Earl Warren's Office, 1938-1953.

Verne Scoggins, Observations on California Affairs by Governor Earl Warren's Press Secretary.

Beach Vasey, Governor Warren and the Legislature.

INTRODUCTION

When I was requested to write an introduction to the historical interview of C. L. Dellums for The Bancroft Library Oral History Project of the University of California, it seemed an awesome task which I was not prepared to undertake. This was so, not because I do not know the man well enough; not because I had not worked very closely with him for the same goals and objectives over the years; but, because of his great stature as a man who defies description. He is a man who stands tall among tall men in the field of Human Rights. This is so because C. L. Dellums has spent the past five decades helping build bridges of understanding to ease the burden of the poor and disadvantaged. While he had a fierce devotion to the Negro in his struggle against racial discrimination and segregation he was always ready to seek justice for all, regardless of race, color or creed.

Cottrell Lawrence Dellums is a native of Texas. As a high school student his talent in oratory manifested itself and he soon became known as an orator. He won state oratorical contests and his keen mind and unusual linguistic ability made him a formidable opponent on the platform. It should be noted that very early, young Dellums began to sign his name "C. Lawrence Dellums." Soon after he began his public career, he became known simply by the initials of his given names. Few of C. L.'s associates know what his full name is.

This ability to speak forcefully and well became C. L.'s hallmark. Wherever he went he was solicited by his associates to be the spokesman for the group seeking to make a presentation of grievances, be it a local official, state governor, or member of Congress. His deportment, his impeccable appearance, his handsome features marked by piercing hazel blue eyes added to his personal magnetism. He demanded to be heard and when he took the floor he was heard and had an uncanny ability to go straight to the heart of the issue. When there was a need to right a wrong, C. L. would represent the persecuted whatever his station in life.

It would take several volumes to fully discuss his career but one phase of his work must be mentioned, that was his work in fighting for a Fair Employment Practices

Commission. After a successful campaign which he headed, he was rewarded by being appointed by Governor Edmond "Pat" Brown to the first Commission in 1959. He has continued as a Commissioner and was the only one reappointed by Governor Reagan when he became governor. He is presently in his fourteenth year of continued service on the Fair Employment Practices Commission.

The historic fight in Oakland against discrimination in hiring Negro teachers; the fight to eliminate racial discrimination in the Oakland Fire Department, the Police Department, the Oakland Post Office, and a score of other civil service jobs including the long fight to get street car motormen and conductors all were the work of C. L. Dellums and a small cadre of co-workers who stood together in the NAACP and the labor movement. He was the first Negro to be elected to the Executive and Arbitration Committee of the Central Labor Committee of Alameda County. Mr. Dellums helped found the radio program "Negroes In The News" and still heads the committee presenting it. His work with A. Philip Randolph in the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters from organizing committee in 1926 and official from 1927 has already been mentioned. In October, 1968, he became International President upon the retirement of A. Philip Randolph.

The NAACP, after the Brotherhood, was his "Cause Celebre," not only as president of the Oakland Branch, but as West Coast Regional Chairman of nine western states. He stood out as "The Leader" in every campaign for civil rights in the fight for freedom.

The talents of C. L. Dellums made him one of America's most distinguished citizens--Labor Leader--Civil Rights and Human Rights Fighters For Freedom. He was one of the chief architects for enlightened legislation which led California and the nation to a new day for foes of discrimination and segregation based on race, color, and creed.

C. L. was always a realist working from the standpoint of concrete facts rather than fantasy, toward the dream of a better tomorrow for all mankind, black and white, old and young, Jew and Protestant or Catholic, regardless of native origin. One of his greatest contributions has been his great knowledge and wisdom which he willingly shared with those who sought him out for counsel. People come from far and near to learn from this great man.

One of his outstanding characteristics is his ability to relate to people. Few men of his stature would have continued to remain close to his people. He kept his office deep in West Oakland and maintained his home in North Oakland in the heart of the Negro ghetto. When one sought an appointment he was never too busy to say, "I'll wait for you, come right down"--no matter how busy at the time, he would lay aside his work to explore with the caller his problem and make a meaningful suggestion for a solution or referral. Many times he answers his own telephone if his secretary is busy or out of the office--the single word "Brotherhood" is the answer at the other end of the line which is full of meaning as it conveys the "no nonsense" approach of the man answering and at the same time this word carries a note of cordiality.

C. L. has had the capacity to carry a work load far beyond the average business executive and it is this ability which has enabled him to participate in so many activities. He always traveled at his own expense and even when he was a delegate to an NAACP Convention or banquet he refused any expense money or remuneration for fees paid. For years his would be the first registration fee received for a meeting.

It is not known even by his closest associates what C. L. does for recreation. It is believed by most that his work was all encompassing and that in these endeavors he found satisfactions which were rewarding enough to suffice. However, it is known that he was an expert billiard player, who, in his early life excelled those who challenged him for a game.

C. L.'s association with his mentor, A. Philip Randolph, made an indelible mark on his life and work. From the beginning of their relationship in Oakland in 1926 until the present time, the friendship has endured with deepening devotion. It is difficult to envision how the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters could have been founded and carried forward without these two men. A. Philip Randolph was the genius who founded the organization working from his base in New York and C. L. Dellums, his protege, working to make the organization a success in the West from his home base in Oakland, California. C. L. has often remarked that their philosophies were held in common and that together they planned their work. Both worked for the major issues of their time, the struggle to organize the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters against the opposition of the powerful Pullman Company;

the fight against Communism and infiltration of the National Negro Congress in the 1930s; the March on Washington Movement in 1941, and the fight against racial discrimination within the labor movement itself. In 1963, C. L. remained in Chicago locked in negotiations with the Pullman Company and did not himself attend the historic March in Washington, D.C. But, he had worked long and hard to support the effort initiated by Phil Randolph.

Finally, C. L. always had a high regard and love for his family. His mother in her later years made her home with him and his wife until her death. He always spoke with affection for his brother Vernie and his family, one of whom is his nephew, the Honorable Congressman Ronald V. Dellums. But, above all he speaks of his love and concern for his wife, Walter, and their daughter, Marva, and his grandchildren. C. L. once said at the conclusion of a speech "We have an obligation to make this a better place for our children and our grandchildren." Such is the philosophy of this magnificent man, still active in the struggle for Human Rights who has allied himself with every movement for good in the past half century. It is good that his historical sketch has been prepared by The Bancroft Library, because this man rarely spoke of himself and his deep sense of personal humility would have kept this information from ever coming to light for the benefit of posterity.

Never have so many been indebted to a single individual. C. L. Dellums is a legend in his own time. I am proud to call him friend.

Mrs. Tarea Hall Pittman
West Coast Regional Director, NAACP
1959-1967

28 June 1973
Berkeley, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY

C. Lawrence Dellums was interviewed by the Regional Oral History Office as a part of the Earl Warren Era Project and its sub-series, Negro Political Leaders. He is the international president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and has served as a commissioner on the California Fair Employment Practices Commission since its inception. The papers of this outstanding civil rights leader are housed in The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California.

Interviewer: Joyce Henderson, Negro history specialist for the Earl Warren Era Project, conducted the interview.

Conduct of the

Interview: The interview sessions took place on December 15, 1970, January 13, 26, April 14, and May 12, of 1971. All sessions were taped in the office of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters located at 1716 7th Street in West Oakland, which has been the meeting hall of union porters since 1934. The old Victorian building retains its 1930's flavor, and even Mr. Dellums's old wall telephone has not been replaced. Also, still present on the wall above Mr. Dellums's desk is the portrait of A. Philip Randolph, the first international president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and a long-time friend of Mr. Dellums.

Editing: The interview was edited by Joyce Henderson and then corrected and expanded by Mr. Dellums.

Joyce Henderson
Interviewer-Editor

15 March 1973
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University of California at Berkeley

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH - C. L. Dellums

Mr. C. Laurence Dellums can look back upon a half century of activity in the field of Human Relations, particularly fighting racial and religious discrimination. He was born in Corsicana, Texas on January 3, 1900, and he attended the public schools in Texas, graduating from Jackson High School in 1919. He chose to make his permanent home in the bay district, and has been a resident of Oakland since 1923.

He joined the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters when it was organized in 1925, becoming a local official when the local was established in 1926, becoming a full-time official in 1927, and when the "International" was set up in 1929, he was elected a Vice President, a position he held until October, 1968. Effective that date, Mr. A. Philip Randolph, founder, organizer and first International President, retired, and upon his nomination, Mr. Dellums was elected his successor.

Mr. Dellums was the first Negro elected member of the Executive and Arbitration Committee for the Central Labor Council of Alameda County. He joined the N.A.A.C.P. in 1924, and has been actively involved since 1927. He served many years in the Alameda County Branch, N.A.A.C.P.; when he was elected President of the same branch the membership was under 400, and when he left the presidency it was 3500. When the eight western states were formed into an N.A.A.C.P. Region in 1944, he was the unanimous choice for the Chairmanship and remained in that position without opposition until he refused to serve any longer and was replaced in 1967. Mr. Dellums holds too many "firsts" to enumerate, and it would take too much space to list all of them.

Mr. Dellums and Mr. Randolph became closer than no doubt any other officials in the organization because of their similar philosophies. At every opportunity they spent much time together discussing the plight of the Negro and planning something to do about it, including the original March on Washington movement, which resulted in President F. D. Roosevelt issuing Executive Order No. 8802 in 1941, eliminating discrimination in defense industries and the government itself.

He helped organize and led the statewide movement for a state fair employment practices law. After its adoption, Governor Brown asked him to accept an appointment to the Commission. Mr. Dellums accepted a two-year term in 1959, a full term in 1961, and a second full term in 1965, at which time the Governor appointed him Chairman of the Commission, which is another Negro "first." He was succeeded as Chairman of the Commission by Commissioner Gherini. Of the seven Commissioners, Mr. Dellums was the only one that Governor Reagan reappointed.

From the office of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters
ca. 1972

[Interview 1 - December 15, 1970]

I EARLY YEARS

JH: May I ask first where you were born?

Dellums: I was born in Corsicana, Texas, January the 3rd, 1900.

JH: What were the names of your grandparents and parents?

Dellums: My grandfather on my father's side was Fortson; I don't remember his first name. My grandfather on my mother's side was named Anthony; again I don't recall the first name. My stepfather's name was William Henry Dellums. My mother's name was Emma Dellums.

JH: What was your father's occupation?

Dellums: My father was a barber with his own small, 4-chair shop.

Avoiding the Draft

JH: Did you go into World War I?

Dellums: No, I was a little too young for the first war, and too old for the second. Fortunately, the first war ended when it did. If it had lasted six more months I am quite sure that I would have been in. I was registered, and representatives of the draft board tried to pressure me into going to Prairieview into what they call an SATC, I believe. It was the

Dellums: Students Army Training Corps or something like that. But the Negroes had only been truck drivers and they were rounding up all the youngsters who could drive an automobile. There weren't too many of us that could drive an automobile back then. But I could drive an automobile and so they demanded that I go. I refused to go. Fortunately for me, I've always been nosey and not too scary, and knowing there would be problems, I got a copy of the Selective Service Act and read it! So I knew what was in it; I knew how much power the draft board had and I knew something about my rights and of course I stood on them.

As long as they could get volunteers to fill the quota for that truck-driving program, they couldn't compel anyone else to go. I knew a lot of the other teen-age Negroes were crazy enough to let the white people pressure them into going. They could get them, but I wouldn't go.

Then I put on my draft papers, when I filled them out, that my choice was the Air Corps. I did that for strategic reasons. I had no particular desire to fly, but I knew that they were not going to take any Negroes in the Air Corps. It was another way to stay out of the war as long as I could, so I demanded it. They tore up the first papers I filled out and called me in. I went down to the office and they told me I had to fill out some more because I knew they weren't taking any colored boys into the Air Corps. They did have enough courtesy to say "colored boy" and not call me something else. If they had, they probably would have had trouble from me.

So I took the new ones and filled them out just like I had filled out the first ones, and I put down "Air Corps" again. I stood on my rights. I figured that would probably keep me out a while because I was going to fight them!

JH: The SATC was the equivalent of the ROTC?

Dellums: Yes, I think they called it "Students" then.

JH: Were you in high school, or just out of high school?

Dellums: I think I was still in high school. I was still in high school when they were trying to get me.

Coming to California

JH: How old were you when you came to California?

Dellums: Twenty-three.

JH: You came directly to San Francisco?

Dellums: Yes, I bought a ticket to San Francisco because I had chosen San Francisco as the most ideal place for a Negro to live in 1923; and secondly I wanted to be a lawyer and I learned that the University of California had the best law school. So everything I wanted was right there.

JH: With Oakland so close to Berkeley, why didn't you come there? I guess Oakland wasn't known too well.

Dellums: No, in 1923 nobody knew anything about Oakland. Everything you could study or read was [about] San Francisco, and otherwise when you said California, people thought that you meant Los Angeles because that is all you heard about. When you said you were going to San Francisco, people would look at you, "What do you mean San Francisco?" Everybody went to Los Angeles, another reason why I wouldn't go.

JH: You mean black people from Texas went to Los Angeles?

Dellums: Yes. (I don't mind you saying "black", but I prefer "Negro" and I will say Negr^d.) I knew people who had gone to Los Angeles like everybody knew somebody who'd gone to California. That's what they'd say, "They went to California." But they had actually gone to Los Angeles. But I said, "Well, I'm going to San Francisco," because I selected it as the best place to live. So I bought a ticket for San Francisco although I didn't know anyone west of the Rockies! But the porter on the train saw that I was excited or nervous, and would sit and talk with me. Another reason he probably talked with me

Dellums: was because there were so few Negroes on the day coach. He found out I was going to San Francisco and he asked, "Where are you going to stay?" I said I was going to ask the taxi driver to take me to a rooming house. So he explained that there was no such thing out here as a rooming house. They have hotels. But finally after he got the information, he said, "Let me give you some advice, young man. Get off in Oakland. There are not enough Negroes in San Francisco for you to find in order to make some connections over there. Worst of all," he said, "you will never find a job. The few Negroes around here in the Bay District are in Oakland, so you can make some contacts."

Then he said, "I know a very fine lady and I'm almost positive she's got a spare room that she'll rent to you. You'll get a room for about \$3 a week, and it is here in West Oakland. Then you'll have a base which you can operate from until you find your way around." So he gave me this lady's name. He didn't hand me an address, but he could direct me pretty close to it; it was at the corner of Eleventh and Wood Streets. I found the house. He told me it was within walking distance from the 16th Street railroad station, so I got off there.

I took my bag which wasn't heavy (didn't own enough for it to be heavy), and I walked on as he directed me and found this house, and sure enough the lady did rent me a room. I roomed with her for quite some time. That was just a few blocks from Seventh Street and I could meet fellows and ask questions, try to figure out how I could make a living around here. It wasn't easy, and of course it was so rough that I never became a lawyer because there was no way to make enough money to go to school and support myself also.

JH: So you never did go to the University of California then?

Dellums: No, no. The first time I spoke at the university-- I don't recall now who asked me out there--but while introducing me he made quite a point of my never having attended. It was someone I had met

Dellums: several times and he told in the introduction that I had a great desire to attend the university and wanted to be a lawyer. But the unique part about it, my first time on the campus, I was coming to bring information, instead of to get information. I've spoken at the university several times in years back. As a matter of fact, I've spoken at universities all up and down the coast, from the University of Washington to USC. I've also spoken before select groups from Columbia and the University of Chicago at our headquarters on various trips back east.

The Pacific Steamship Company

Dellums: I first got a job hiring on the ships, what you call "going down to the sea in ships." They were just coastwide ships known as the old Admiral Line. The Pacific Steamship Company, I think, was the name of it. They ran from British Columbia to San Diego. But most of the ships only went from Seattle to Los Angeles. I worked a few months on the ships but I soon realized that I'd never save any money there; so I couldn't go to school with money I made on the ships. They only paid \$45 a month salary on the ship. Then, of course, you had to rely upon gratuities--that's too uncertain.

JH: Exactly what was your job on the ships?

Dellums: They called us "room stewards." We were waiters. On the smaller ships, each waiter had so many rooms, according to the number of rooms on that ship and according to the number of rooms occupied. You may have six or seven rooms. Generally each waiter had one officer's quarters to take care of. He did everything; he was the maid in the rooms and then during the meals, he waited tables. There were some bigger ships, which I never did work on. On the larger ones, the waiters are bellhops. They had room stewards that did nothing else but take care of the rooms. But they did what maids do: clean up the rooms and of course take care of the passengers if they had any needs.

JH: You found out that you could make more money on the railroad?

Dellums: No, but I knew I couldn't save any money on the ship. I didn't make enough to save any. Then it was a terrible life to live on the ships, because in those days they had one room and all the Negro help on the ship had to live in that one room. They called it "the Glory Hole." They had bunk beds around the wall, three high. One man on the ship, a Negro called the janitor of the ship, was king of the Glory Hole. What he said went in the Glory Hole; there was no appeal from him. He ran the poker game every night. Of course he kept that light burning in there and with the fellows sitting around playing poker and keeping up that noise, you'd be lucky to get to sleep before one-thirty, two o'clock in the morning. Then you've got to get up early to start serving breakfast the next morning. So that was a rough life. Also I resented the fact that we had to live like cattle in the Glory Hole.

Becoming a Pullman Porter

Dellums: So I sought some other work. I started hanging around the Southern Pacific station, trying to get on as a waiter in the diners because I had experience as a hotel waiter. I had credentials that I could render almost any service in a first-class hotel. I had worked in the Adolphus Hotel in Dallas, on the Roof-Garden, which was the most exclusive place they had in those days, and you had to be able to render silver service to work up there. It was a bad time of the year to get out on the diners, but I didn't know that. I went at a time that men were being laid off.

Standing around the SP one day, one of the older fellows told me, "You're just wasting your time coming down here in bad weather. I think I ought to tell you there's no way for you to get on before May. You're not going to get on here in January."

Dellums: Finally one day he saw me down there and he asked me would I be interested in getting a job as a Pullman porter. So I told him, "Right now, I'm interested in getting a job doing anything because I'm having a hard time keeping my room rent paid and I'm budgeting myself every day for food." I don't recall now what it was; it was 40 or 60¢ a day for two meals--a light breakfast and a dinner. So he showed me where the Pullman office was, right next to where we were standing around the commissary department of the SP. So I went upstairs and the man looked funny when he interviewed me and I knew something was wrong. He didn't give me an application the first day but he told me to come back the next day. I went back the next day and he gave me an application. He told me to fill it out and bring it back.

I took the application to my room, but before I could get it filled out, the young fellow who was handling the crews on the ships came looking for me. He needed some men to go out on a ship. So I made the trip; we had become friends. I didn't take the application back to the Pullman Company until about three weeks later. It was about the middle of January when I took it back and I was afraid it was too late. But the man down there said they were proud to see me. They had two porters being instructed over in the yards then; so he took my application and, without checking it or anything, just sent me right on over there. Everything was all settled. All I had to do was come back; it was just like I had a job!

JH: Do you suppose that that was unusual treatment?

Dellums: Yes, as I learned later. After I had been working for a little better than a month, I went down one day and they told me that I had gotten a write-up. The superintendent wanted to see me. I said, "What about?" And they said, "You don't ask questions. If the superintendent wants to see you, just go to see him!"

They gave me tickets to ride the ferryboat across the Bay (that was before the bridge was built, of course) to go to San Francisco to see the superintendent. I went over and they showed me

Dellums: to his office. We had a long talk. He told me right off the reel, "Don't worry about it. You haven't done anything wrong. You're not in trouble. I had a man to write you up. It didn't make any difference what he accused you of; I just wanted to get you over here and sit you down and talk with you. So he wrote you up and said you were smoking on duty. Well, everybody smokes on duty, so it wasn't anything that would make any difference. There was nothing awful about it."

He told me why I was employed. He spent most of the time telling me how to keep the job, because he said, "You're not the type the Pullman Company employs for porters. That is why Mr. Wells hesitated about giving you an application the first day. You speak good English, but you say 'yes' and 'no.' You said 'yes' and 'no' to Mr. Wells. That's why he wasn't going to hire you."

JH: What made him change his mind?

Dellums: Well, I don't like to go into that because it is the only time in my life that I became desperate enough to use my Masonry. But I was in desperate straits for a job. I had been around here long enough then to realize that there wasn't very much work Negroes could get. It was a common saying around the billiard parlors here in West Oakland that the ways a Negro could make a living in the Bay District then were very limited. One was to go down to the sea in ships and the second was to work on the railroads or for the railroads down in the yards and thirdly, illegally. It was just a common expression: only three ways to make a living. Negroes couldn't get much city work. You could count few Negro bootblacks in West Oakland. You could find no Negro barbershop porters; you could find no Negro hotel waiters or bellhops. It was rough. So I saw Mr. Wells hesitate and I could see in his face that he didn't want to say no, because he had noticed the Masonic emblem on me.

JH: He was a Mason?

Dellums: Yes. So he had to clear it with the superintendent. He didn't want to take the responsibility of

Dellums: employing a Negro with my attitude. So he checked with the superintendent that afternoon and that night and told him that I was in desperate straits and that I was a Mason. The superintendent telephoned, "Give him the job!" It was the first time that both of them had been faced with hiring a Negro Mason and they had to respond; so they gave me a job.

Prince Hall Masonry

JH: I am interested in Masonry from everything that you've told me. Why did you join in the first place? Was it a fraternal kind of organization?

Dellums: It's a secret fraternal organization, the best known in the world and the highest regarded and respected in the world. No Mason is supposed to ask anybody to join. My father was a Mason but he never said a word to me about it and that aroused my curiosity. He was also a member of the Knights of Pythias and as soon as I was eighteen years old he asked me to join the Knights of Pythias. But he never said anything to me about Masonry and that aroused my curiosity. So finally one day I asked him about it. He told me you have to seek yourself to be a Mason. We don't solicit. So I started seeking and I got in. [Laughs]

JH: It was just because of curiosity that you sought to join?

Dellums: Yes. I started of course because of the curiosity my father aroused, asking me to join one lodge and not the other one. But of course as I grew older and got out in the world I began to realize you almost never saw a prominent member of what we now call "the establishment" that wasn't a Mason. I learned that up to that time the common belief was that a man couldn't become president of the United States unless he was a Mason (although it wasn't really true), and they generally went all the way up and became a Shriner. I'm a 32nd degree Mason and Shriner, myself. It is recognized and it's one

Dellums: thing in which your color doesn't prevent people from recognizing you.

JH: So friendship lines go beyond racial lines.

Dellums: Yes, to a large extent in Masonry.

JH: Could you tell me, just generally, what the criteria for becoming a Mason are?

Dellums: You're supposed to undergo a rigid investigation. You're supposed to be a man of high calibre and integrity, and have almost no blemish on your character at all. A committee will make a thorough investigation on you. They don't even take your word if you say you are married. You must produce the marriage certificate. They have to see it themselves; they don't take your word for anything. They just do a job. I don't know how it is now. I've heard it's not nearly as strict as it used to be. But when I came along, blackballing was common. They blackballed you if anybody in there had any reason to think there was something the committee hadn't found out about you. If the committee could find out anything in which you didn't measure up, then they would never recommend you. You never even got in the door. But if you got accepted by the examining committee, then that report is given in the lodge and the lodge takes a vote as to whether or not they'll admit you. When they're taking a vote they pass a ballot box around and it's got little white marbles and black marbles in it. They call them "balls." So if you get one black ball in that box, you've had it! You don't get in.

JH: I really don't understand the purpose behind the society. Does it serve the community in any open way?

Dellums: Yes. Some of us said that it's a secret organization, largely designed to tend the sick and to bury the dead. But they do a lot of charitable work and make charitable contributions. But I would imagine that probably the best comparison of such secret organizations would be fraternities and sororities. You develop something that is largely clannish, and

Dellums: if you had a choice to make between two people and one person was a member of your sorority and the other person wasn't, you'd more than likely lean toward the sister of the sorority. Some of the secret fraternities were supposed to be even tighter, more secret and harder to get into because they are based upon your character. Here and there you'd see somebody'd get blackballed you'd known a lifetime. I'm thinking of one person that was blackballed in my lodge before I left Texas. I thought the world and all of him. I thought he was the salt of the earth and I couldn't understand him being blackballed. I spoke to my father about it; he was a smart old duck. He told me there was a way to do anything, and a way to find out! And I won't go into that angle of it! But six months later I took this man's name back and I used the knowledge and experience of my father to find out who blackballed him--and I did! Then I went to the man who blackballed my friend and asked him why and he said, "Because I'm a Mason." That was not a good enough answer to suit me! "Well," he said, "you know the things that a good Mason won't do?" Yes, I know them." "Well," he said, "I'm going with his wife, and if I let him in I'll have to give her up. I could not slip with a Mason's wife, and you know that. So I had to keep him out or I'd have to give her up."

Now that's an indication of how Masons felt, and that was a real Mason. He would not get involved with a Mason's wife or daughter, if he knew it was a fellow Mason. He need not be a member of his lodge. If he knew he was a Mason he'd not do anything like that no matter the temptation. A real Mason couldn't do it. So that's why he blackballed that fellow. I don't believe lodges today are as difficult to get into as they were then.

JH: So a Mason has a loyalty to another Mason. Even Mr. Wells had.

Dellums: Yes. He recognized the fact that I was a brother Mason. Fortunately, what's known as the three-letter Masons are the same as the white Masons. Now there is a four-letter Mason set-up that is not the same. The three-letter Masons are known as the

Dellums: Prince Hall Masons. The Prince Hall Masons got their charter from the same source as the white Masons of America got theirs. Prince Hall went to England and was able to get a charter to return to the states and organize Masonry for Negroes because white Masons wouldn't take them in. So everything is identical, with the exception, I guess, of the password. The secret password changes periodically. You have to have a secret password to get into the lodge. As I understand it, that is the only thing that's different. We use the same rituals and everything that white Masons use.

In the Prohibition days there were a lot of people going to speakeasies. America was dry; all kinds of dives came out of Prohibition. [Seriously] You'd never see a Masonic emblem in any of those dives. I frequented them all over the country and as a guest of people in the East, where I didn't belong. But I knew all of them in West Oakland and went into one of them occasionally--all the illegal places and whatnot. I went into them to see what they did in there, what went on. No one had to tell me, I went into them to learn firsthand and I would always take off my emblem before I'd go in. I wouldn't dare wear an emblem in a place like that. You wouldn't be much of a Mason to wear an emblem where anything illegal is going on. You'd take it off and put it in your pocket before you'd go in there.

JH: So wearing or not wearing an emblem is a very deliberate thing?

Dellums: Yes.

JH: Is this what you meant by using your Masonry?

Dellums: Not just because I had the emblem on, oh no. I let Wells know through an action that meant I needed help and I was appealing to him for help. No Mason is ever proud of having to do it. I don't think many have ever had to do it. It's called a distress signal. Nobody would catch on except another Mason, if he could see it; otherwise nobody would pay any attention. You can do it camouflaged in such a way that only a Mason would even notice it!

II THE BROTHERHOOD OF SLEEPING CAR PORTERS

Working Conditions of Pullman Car Porters

JH: Tell me about the conditions under which you were employed by the Pullman Company.

Dellums: Well, when I went to work for the Pullman Company in January, 1924, they paid \$60 a month, by the calendar month. If you worked all the calendar month, you might get \$60; but the odds were ten to one that you'd never get \$60 while you were a young porter. Now once you were there long enough to have enough seniority to hold a regular run, as long as you didn't miss a trip during that calendar month, you'd get your \$60. But the runs were not regulated. The company set up their runs the way they wanted to set them up. Let's say one porter might have a regular run from Oakland to Seattle. You'd total up the number of hours that he was actually on duty in an ordinary 30-day month, and he might work 300 hours. Then there might be another porter working right out of the same place, let's say running Chicago, and he might work 350 hours. Both of them would get the \$60. We, the union, did have records. We had some economists and statisticians to study the Pullman Company for us once. They did it gratis as friends of Randolph's.

JH: Oh, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters had these studies made?

Dellums: Yes. Paul Douglas, the ex-senator from Illinois, was one of the men who did the job for us. He's still living. The other man was named Edward Burman, as I recall. I believe at the time, Paul Douglas was dean of Economics at the University of

Dellums: Chicago, and Dr. Burman had a similar position at the University of Illinois, or Northwestern. I may have the schools reversed, but I'm almost certain those were the schools. They made this study for us. We had an actual record of one run where the porter worked 485 hours a month! And he got the same \$60. Then others worked as little, I believe, as 335 hours--that was the minimum any regular assigned porter worked. They all got the \$60.

Now the extra porters, which were the young men who went to work, would have to work what they call "the extra board"; they didn't get paid until they went out. There was no way for them to make \$60, because the Pullman Company had all kinds of schemes to prevent paying. The most noted rule was that they didn't pay PM time. Now that meant that if they ordered the porter to do work at 12:01 PM his pay wouldn't start until midnight. They never started a porter's pay on PM time. Of course it was common for porters to go to work at three or four o'clock in the afternoon and the pay wouldn't start until midnight. Later on, when the company was forced to make some changes, they set up "a mileage month," which was eleven thousand miles. If a porter worked beyond that distance, he got thirty cents for each hundred extra miles that he worked. Now when they did that, they didn't start his pay until the train moved. The porter could go to work here in the yards in West Oakland at five o'clock in the afternoon and start receiving passengers at 7:30 or 8 o'clock. But the trains might not leave until 11:30, midnight, or maybe one o'clock in the morning. His pay didn't start until the train moved because then the timebook showed only the departure of the train and arrival of the train.

JH: Of course his work started before then.

Dellums: His work started hours before. Most of the trains in those days left the original terminal at night, and a porter would have to be in the yards at least two hours, sometimes three hours before the departure. He had to go two or three hours before the reception of the passengers so that he could get

Dellums: the car ready and the beds made down so that the people could lie down when they came on, if they wanted to. The train may not leave for hours. You know there were any number of trains that didn't leave until after midnight, but in all those cases the passengers were allowed to get on the train and go to bed at nine o'clock. The porter would have to have that car ready and start receiving possibly at nine o'clock. He would have to stand around out there in the rain, snow, sleet or whatnot, all that time, waiting for people to arrive and board the train if they wanted to. He was supposed to be out on the ground, on the platform, waiting. But his pay would start when the train departed.

When the train arrived at its destination, his pay stopped. But he had to put the passengers off, get their baggage off, and get them all discharged and then go back in the car and make sure that all the beds were properly put away. If the trains arrived early in the morning, sometimes over half the beds might still be down. So then he would have to kind of tidy up the car, pick up all the soiled linen and count it and put it in sacks, make up a linen slip to show how much clean linen was left in the car and how much soiled linen he was putting into how many sacks, and then pile it all up. So he could be as long as two hours getting off the train if it arrived early enough in the morning. No matter what time of the day it arrived, he couldn't get off in thirty minutes. Yet his pay stopped when that train arrived. So you see there was no way for him to make \$60. I never did so.

JH: While you were an extra porter, how did you know when you were needed on a run?

Dellums: By orders, you reported every day. They had the sign-out office, they called it, in the West Oakland yards on the ground floor, beneath the main Oakland office which was upstairs. The man known as the sign-out man worked down at the Oakland pier in the mornings supervising the trains coming in. Then at the sign-out time he would take the red trains and come on up to West Oakland, get off at the Pine Street stop and walk down in the yards. Some of the porters would already be there when he got off on 7th Street and would follow him down to his office.

Dellums: Then he would go in this little office which had a little window. He would sit there at a desk and look over the trips he had for that day and the porters that were in town. He could decide which porter he wanted to give a trip to. When he had decided, he'd write out what they called the sign-out slip, which had instructions--the name and number of the car, where you report, and where it is going. The sign-out man would open that little window and always some porters had to stand up close enough to hear. He wasn't going to yell out any names. Some porter would have to stand up close to the window to hear him and call it out to the rest of the porters.

Well, I think we had more slow rain in those days than we do now, because the Bay District was noted for slow rains. It almost never had hard rains. Just a slow, misty type of rain. Sometimes it would last for days, but yet you would have to go down to the yards. The porters stood outside in the weather, but the sign-out man was inside.

We had started the union, and I had become looked upon as the unofficial leader of the men, and of course the Pullman Company knew it. They apparently were punishing me by not giving me trips very often. As a matter of fact, I had maintained my union membership in that so-called union that they had for the fellows working on the ships. When I did make a trip for the Pullman Company, I'd stay in town so long before getting another trip. I played billiards in West Oakland with a young fellow who handled the dispatching for the ships, so when I got broke enough, I'd speak to him about getting me a run out on the ships. He put me out on the first ship that was coming through whether it was going to Los Angeles, Seattle or what, because I went nineteen days once without getting a trip with the Pullman Company and without my name ever being called. I made two trips on the ships during that nineteen days and my name had never been called by the Pullman Company sign-out man. My friends were watching to see if my name was ever called. But with these long, cold, slow winter rains we had, well I just wouldn't go down there on some of those bad days. That was all there was to it! Then I got to thinking and decided to do something about it. So I went down one day and it was raining, cold

Dellums: at the time. I got there before this sign-out man got there. When he got there and opened the door to go in his little office, I went right in with him before he could close the door. He turned and looked at me. He was a short fellow and had to kind of look up at me.

"Who invited you in here?"

I said, "No one needs to invite me to come in out of the rain. I have sense enough to come in out of the rain. Now when you decide to come out and stay out there in the rain to sign us out, I'll stay out there in the rain. As long as you're inside, I'm inside."

He got red-headed and looked at me. Well, he knew me. I'd been there long enough for him to know that I wasn't going to back away or anything. So finally he opened that little window and called out to the rest of them, "You've got as much right in here as Dellums has, so all of you can squeeze in, squeeze in!"

All of them couldn't squeeze in [laughing]: it was just a little cubby hole. But that broke it up. I kept doing it every day so he had to get me out of his hair. It wasn't too many months after that before the company found a little house not far from the yards down here at the end of Wood Street and they rented it. They made a sign-out office out of that. They put some benches in there for the porters to sit on; then at least they could get out of the weather. So that's how we broke that up. But I knew that the Pullman Company was going to fire me.

Incidentally, this superintendent who was responsible for them calling me was transferred to Boston. He was no longer here, so I wasn't half as safe after he left. I don't know what would have happened if he had still been here, because they would have ordered him to get rid of me. At the time, they sent a new superintendent out here by the name of O. W. Snoddy. The information we picked up some time later was that he was under instructions that almost his first official act was to get rid of Dellums.

The Penalties for Belonging to the Brotherhood

Dellums: We had reason to believe, at least we've learned since, that the Pullman Company felt that if they could get rid of Ashley L. Totten in Kansas City and Dellums in Oakland, they'd break the backbone of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

JH: When you cleverly won a sign-out house for porters, were you a member of the Brotherhood?

Dellums: Oh, yes. That's one of the reasons I didn't go out on many trips. Of course the regular sign-out man never did like me too much. When I first went to work, that fellow never liked me too much because I was a little bit different. I didn't clown, no scraping and bowing, no grinning around him. If he did something I thought was wrong I'd tell him so.

For instance, in those days the Chamber of Commerce had an annual special to Mexico City. Sometimes there would be maybe two or three hundred Pullman cars down in Mexico City during a summer. They'd haul Chambers of Commerce from all over the country there. The Pacific Coast Chamber of Commerce, of course, was quite something. They were the leaders. The same porters went on those trips every year. Most of those porters had been working long enough to have a regular run. So they would let those fellows get off of their regular runs and take this special to Mexico City.

It was worth money, because the people who got on there would get to drinking and give porters money. The porters had to eat and they knew that. The porters stayed in Mexico City for three or four days, waiting to bring the people back. People would live on the car because there wasn't the hotel space to take care of all those hundreds of people. They arranged the cars scattered around there in Mexico City so that the passengers could remain on the car every night. They'd come in full of liquor and they'd give the porters money. Then they'd fill up the car with good liquor to bring back to the States. Not only could they purchase good liquor when they were in Mexico but they could bring all the liquor they could haul back. Nobody carried

Dellums: any more clothes in their bags than they had to, and some would carry a bag with nothing in it so that they could pack it full of liquor to bring back. Of course the Mexican immigration people were not so much interested in what you'd bring out. You had bought it; they took your word for it. The immigration people on this side of the border were not going to bother the Chamber of Commerce, you know, the big shots! Of course the porters, the conductors, and everybody in the crew would fill up all the space they could. Those cars would just come back loaded with liquor.

Well, I'd learned that those porters that kept making those trips always brought this old sign-out man liquor. Oftentimes they gave him money, a kickback, to show appreciation for the good trip that he gave them. As a matter of fact, when I went on the road there was a common expression that originated in the dining cars among the railroad men: "there is a good story on page one hundred." Now passengers would leave magazines on the train after they'd finished reading them. So traditionally the porters would go through the train when the passengers had gotten off and pick up a magazine. If it was one of these kickback trips, they'd clip some money to page one hundred. They'd get in and take it to the dispatcher and say, "Mr. So-and-so, I picked up a Newsweek (to use a name) on the train for you because I'm pretty sure you'll like the Newsweek. There's a good story on page one hundred." Every time, he knew what that meant. So the bribery was on that, the kickback.

All the porters told me about this Mexico special and who went on it. I got acquainted with some of the porters that were going on the special, and I found out that they couldn't speak Spanish. There was one fellow referred to as "Poppa Pat," a great big fellow named Patrick. He was reared around the borders, down in Texas and he could get by with Spanish. He couldn't speak any real Spanish; he spoke "Mexican," you might call it the peon language, to get by. I couldn't find a single one of those porters who knew more than one word in Spanish, and I can't tell you what that one word

Dellums: was! [Laughs] You've got to use your imagination.

So this was the year we were getting the Mexico City special together. I went to the sign-out man. I wanted to know why he would take fellows who had a regular job off of their jobs to make this special when all of us that were on as extra porters were starving and needing the trip. He resented the fact that I would question him about the way he signed out. I told him, "Well, I work for the company the same as you and I'm involved. You're beating me out of trips, and I'll question you about anything I think you ought to be questioned about. I don't care whether you like it or not, but I'm still going to question you. If you answer, okay; if you don't answer, I'll try and force you to talk." We just had some words about it.

So he didn't like me, but the assistant sign-out man that worked once a week was a very nice man. He had spent considerable time in the military over one of the Negro regiments. He spent some time in the Philippines as an officer in one of the Negro regiments. In those days, as you probably know by now, we had four Negro regiments, the Nineth and Tenth Cavalry and the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Infantry, and Negroes served in no other place in the army. They had all white officers. Major Price was this man's name and all I ever knew was "Major." He had told me that he was a major and that he had had experience with Negro troops. He didn't have the stereotyped ideas about Negroes that this other guy had because he knew more about them. I don't know whether he really liked me or was in sympathy with the position that I had taken. But he liked the fact that I didn't scrape and bow. I called the sign-out men by their names. No other porter would call the regular sign-out man "Frank," but I called him "Frank" because I knew it would make him red-headed! [Laughs] He didn't like it. But that was his name. He didn't call me "Mr. Dellums" so why should I call him "Mr."? But the Major didn't mind.

On the day he was on duty, if it was possible for him to give me a trip, he would give me a trip. Now he was under wraps eventually and he told me

Dellums: about it. When he was under wraps, in order not to give me trips, he would put me on what they call "station duty." That was a protection porter. They never sent out trains in those days without a porter. Every night they would have a porter to put in at least four hours down at the pier as protection, so if any porter missed out and didn't show up for his car, a man would be there to take it out. A porter could get ill; anything could happen where they'd need a porter. Once in a while something would happen to the assigned porter when I was doing station duty. I got station duty every time the Major was on sign-out duty in the hopes that something would happen and I would get a trip. And then once in a while if there was a trip going out the next morning, he would give me that trip, pretending that it came up after sign-out time, and that he didn't know it in time because it was going out that early. The sign-out time I think was two o'clock in the afternoon. He'd say he had trouble finding a porter so he gave it to the station duty porter. So I'd get a trip once in a while with Major Price in that way.

Oh, there's always some decent people in the world. That's one of the thing that caused me to be able to keep my equilibrium; otherwise I'd show the Commies how to put on a real revolution. But every time I would get pretty well disgusted and ready to give up on this country and this system and ready to tear it up, I'd run into some decent white person who'd make me renew my faith in mankind and decide to postpone my revolution and wait a little bit longer. And the Pullman Company had some of those same kinds of people.

I would get anonymous phone calls at night by people telling me things the company was planning. I was told that I was going to be fired and so I knew it before it happened. Sometimes when I'd get a trip, I'd get a tip-off when there was going to be a 'spotter' on the train--"watch out!" That meant that they were definitely sending a man out to try to find anything he could get on me that would justify firing me. They kept right on until they finally did! Once I made a trip to Yosemite Valley that the assistant superintendent was on.

Dellums: I learned later that his job on there was to find something on me. His wife was with him. She said enough to let me know what his job was, but he didn't do it. I think she raised sand with him because she told me before she got off the train that the Pullman Company would be better off if they had more porters of my calibre. She was tired of the scraping and bowing, and of the Uncle Tom type of porter. She said, "Don't worry, you're not going to get fired." That was a tip-off when she said that to me. By the time I went to work for the Pullman Company, most of the porters were not scraping and bowing, but there were still too many left.

A little later on I made a trip up in the gold country to Goldfield and the other little towns there. They were just about abandoned old gold mines. It was a passenger run, and I think they only had about three passengers. I was sitting down in the train, during the day when nobody much was on the train. I had the Messenger Magazine (the Messenger was published by A. Philip Randolph at that time) and The Pittsburgh Courier and I was reading. The Pittsburgh Courier was supporting us then, and obviously the Randolph magazine was supporting us. So I sat there reading, and this man apparently passed close enough to see what I was reading. Then he went and took a seat several seats away from where I was sitting and rang the bell. I went to see what he wanted and he asked me to get him a couple of pillows. He had refused pillows that morning when I offered the passengers pillows. When I went to get the pillow slip and the key to unlock the berth to get the pillows out, he sat down where I had been sitting. When I got his pillows and came back, he was sitting there reading my papers, and what was I supposed to do? I just walked to a seat some other place. I had no objections to his reading them.

Then finally, when he finished checking them over, he got up and came and sat down in front of me and started talking with me about them. He said he had never seen a magazine or a paper that seemed to be published by Negroes. Are they? And I told him yes, they both were. So he said he didn't even

Dellums: know that Negroes published a magazine. He'd heard about Negro newspapers but he never heard of a Negro magazine. He went on to compliment it. What he was saying was true; it was an excellent magazine, no question of that, brilliant articles in it written by Randolph, Chandler Owens, George Schuyler, who was a young man and I think a socialist then--he's right of Goldwater now--and two or three other writers. Randolph and Owens wrote articles under other names. Then The Courier, which is another story, because we had made The Courier.

A little while after that they called me in and complained that this man reported me for trying to propagandize him about the union and showing him these papers. The superintendent said he knew all about me and The Pittsburgh Courier. He didn't know much about the Messenger, but he knew what kind of magazine it was, and that the Pullman Company was furnishing me transportation round over this country to spread this Bolshevik propaganda by Randolph! "He's getting his money and his orders from Moscow!"

So I said, "Where is that?" [Laughs] By that time he realized that I was sitting there making fun of him. "What's a Bolshevik?" I said. "What do you mean 'Bolshevik propaganda?'" [all the time pronouncing it "Boolsheevik" imitating the official] "And Moscow?" When he realized that I was ribbing him, he got so red he said, "You're trying to make fun of me." "No," I said, "you're making fun of yourself. You don't even know how to pronounce the word! I don't think that you know where Moscow is." I had seen my discharge slip on his desk when I walked in, so I knew what I was in for and I was tipped already that I was going to be fired. So then he gave me my dismissal slip and told me, "Now you remember one thing," he said when I started out, "you're being discharged for unsatisfactory service only."

So I said, "Well, Mr. Snoddy, I know why I'm being discharged and you know damn well why I'm being discharged and you also know damn well that my service doesn't have a damn thing to do with it!"

Dellums: and I walked out. So then I went next door to the chief clerk who handled the pay and I said I wanted my money. So he looked funny, "You want your money?" I showed him my discharge slip. So he said, "Well, you know when payday is." I said, "My payday is NOW! There's a law in California that if you discharge somebody his pay is due immediately. So I GET my money NOW or you will pay me until I do get my money. I'll still be on the payroll." So he got busy. He said, "Wait a minute, let me figure what is due." So he started to figure and I said, "Would you mind giving me a pencil and a piece of paper off the scratch tablet there. Let me figure with you." So he looked--but he did. And he said, "You can figure up what you've got coming?" and I said, "More than likely better than you can! But well enough, anyway." So actually I was through figuring before he was. So I finished it and I said, "Done." He looked at me and he said, "You through already?" I said, "Yes."

"How much have you got coming?" I said, "No, no, that's your job. You just don't figure up enough and I'll straighten you around." But he figured it up right and got a voucher. They paid me off and I left.

Well, I didn't want the men to panic. I knew that my dismissal was just a beginning. The Pullman Company was going to use it to try to frighten the men and break up the organization. So we started rounding up the men for a meeting. We had a pretty good grapevine; we could get the message out pretty quick. So we rounded up the men every day for the next three or four days in our little office that we had down there on Wood Street, and had meetings at which I talked to the men. I told them not to panic, stay together, that these things were to be expected. There never was a war without some battles, and there never was a battle without casualties. So it fell my lot to make a small sacrifice. To me, losing a job isn't much of a sacrifice. [Philosophically] I told them, "It fell my lot; I got canned. I made a living before I went to work for the Pullman Company. I'll find a way to make a living now. I hope you guys look upon it the same way. It's worth the effort to stay."

Dellums: Then I think I coined my typical phrase that I used all over the nation in rabbleroxing porters from then on, "What do you have to lose? You've only got four things anyway: a hard job, low pay, long hours, and a mean bossman! That's all you've got. What if you do lose it?" So we rallied the men and they stuck. But of course, firing me was just the beginning. The next ten days they fired several others. But 1928 was when they really lowered the boom on us. They fired forty-five of our men and suspended forty-five others. They didn't have enough porters to carry on the work so they transferred some of the work from Oakland to districts at the other end of the run, like to Chicago. A car that Oakland men operated, they transferred to Chicago. A car that they operated to Kansas City, they transferred to Kansas City; the one to St. Louis they transferred to St. Louis. They didn't have enough men to operate them with ninety men on the ground. But it still didn't break us up. We still stuck, though we had it rough. I'd do a lot of going to their homes, holding meetings one at a time. I'd catch them at home and hold a meeting with them to keep their spirits up.

JH: To keep them in the Brotherhood?

Dellums: To keep them in the Brotherhood. I'd go to their homes to collect dues off of them because they were afraid to come to the office. One or two men were fired and they were told that their dismissal was partly because of a lot of hanging around the office all the time, so there were certain ones of them that stopped coming to the office. There were others who never stopped. They came right on. Some of those who stopped coming to the office were still willing to pay. I would go to their homes. I bought an old fourth or fifth-hand Model T Ford. So I'd run around to their homes at night.

Then I soon discovered I had to catch a man as soon as he got off the car, before he got home, and to talk him out of some money out of his gratuities because his wife was opposed to him supporting the Brotherhood. If he got home with the money, I'd never get any out of him. So I learned all of the angles there. I've gone to homes where

Dellums: the wives wouldn't let me in the house. I've gone to homes where the wives opened the door and saw it was me and bawled me out and slammed the door in my face. They told me "Leave my husband alone; don't come back here anymore. We won't have anything to do with you Negroes. You're going to get all the porters fired!"

The Pullman Company had their stool pigeons put out some propaganda that the Pullman Company was the only monopoly job the Negroes had in the nation. Fooling with Randolph and Dellums and their kind would cause Negroes to lose that monopoly. It's amazing who some of the Negroes were who attempted to use that to influence porters to desert the Brotherhood! They used it among what I dubbed "the parlor stool pigeons," professional Negroes--doctors, dentists, lawyers, schoolteachers, whatever they were--all kinds of schemes to get those people to talk to the porters and to the porters' wives.

I recall one lady, a porter's wife who was going to a Negro dentist here. I think, but I'm not sure, he was the first Negro dentist in Oakland, or the second one. She had signed up for a \$125 job. Now you couldn't get in a dentist's office for \$125 now for real dental work. But that was almost major dental work then. That was quite a while back, in the late twenties or early thirties. The dentist found out what her husband did for a living and the second appointment she had with him, he started to propagandize her about the porters following Dellums, Randolph and about the company putting Orientals on the cars. Negroes were going to lose this monopoly and whatnot. Porters are crazy to do it! The women, the children will suffer. So the women ought to talk to these men about it. She got up and bawled that dentist out and walked out of his office and never went back. She didn't let him finish working for that appointment.

We had those kinds of organizations scattered around in most of the key cities. A Negro physician was the leader of the "parlor stool pigeon brigade," as I dubbed them, here in Oakland. With a Negro realtor who had a brother who was a porter, he had attempted to organize the few professionals here to turn Negro sentiment against the porters joining or

Dellums: remaining in the Brotherhood through their wives in order to break up the Brotherhood. But they didn't succeed. We finally won the fight and got a contract signed. We checked up to try to see how many men had stayed with us right on through the full twelve years, never became unfinancial, never dropped out, and almost half of them were here in Oakland. The Pullman Company cut our porters down from 321 to 160, as a result of their intimidation. So I had 160 men to draw upon. Chicago had 2,900, New York had 1,700, and I had more men that stayed all the way than both New York and Chicago put together. I think just about half of the men who never fell by the wayside were here in Oakland. Los Angeles had seven. Seattle had two. And that's been mentioned in more than one book by men who studied the Brotherhood and the highest percentage of dues-paying members were always in Oakland. In the darkest of days, Oakland maintained the highest dues-paying membership percentage-wise.

But another thing that I later discovered in actual round numbers, too, is that Oakland always had around forty-five that had never, never dropped out under any condition. Some of those men, I had to collect dues in their homes, often, but the bulk of those men didn't run from me. If they saw me coming down the street, they didn't turn and go around another way to keep from facing me. They came to the office because they just made up their minds, as I'd tried to teach them, that we were facing a job that had to be done! We pledged ourselves to win the struggle, so we were going to win it.

A. Philip Randolph

JH: Tell me something about A. Philip Randolph. Was he a socialist?

Dellums: He was a socialist, he still is. Oh yes, Randolph's always been a socialist. I first heard of Randolph, oh, when I was working on the ships. I was on one ship and I noticed a fellow (another one of us) on

Dellums: that ship who was always reading. He never participated in the gaming or whatnot on the ship. But he'd get up in his bunk and always had a magazine or something to read. He noticed that I was always reading something too. I'd ask passengers of the ship, "If you finish with a magazine, don't throw it overboard. Save it for me. I'd like to read it." And they would. So finally this fellow spoke to me about my being different. He said, "It looks like we have something in common. You like to read; I like to read." So we became friendly.

Finally he asked me if I read the Messenger magazine. I'd never heard of it before. He said, "Well, you will like this." So he gave me the Messenger that he had and I did like it. I read the articles by Randolph and Chandler Owens and the other writers in there and was impressed by them. So every month when it came out we could buy it in Seattle, but I don't think we could buy it any other place on the coast. At least I didn't see it on newsstands. I learned later that at one time they had a 5,000 circulation in Seattle. There wasn't a thousand Negroes in Seattle including women and children. So you see who was buying it. But it had the rating as being the number one liberal and socialist magazine in the nation for several years. That is how I began to follow Randolph's writings.

When I left the sea, for several years this fellow would always get the Messenger in Seattle and save it for me, so that the next time he came down this way he'd bring it to me. Then after I went on the road for the railroad I lost contact with him. Just once in a while I'd run into him at a billiard parlor around here. Generally he had a Messenger or he'd get it for me.

Then I met Randolph and saw him and heard him speak for the first time in January, 1926. He made his first trip west then and held meetings in what was then Parks Chapel Church, located here in West Oakland at Ninth and Campbell. I went out to the first meeting, and I heard him talk. Ashley Totten came along with Randolph. I liked Randolph. I was impressed by him. I told him years later, after I

Dellums: was working with him and we had become close friends, why I had so much confidence in him. I told him I had that confidence in him the first time I saw him. He made a speech in Oakland in the latter part of January in 1926. He was as skinny as a rail. He was so tall and thin that once in a while he put his hand on his hip and it would gradually slide down. He was so thin, he didn't have a hip! [Laughs] I had to marvel at that.

I had read everything that I could get my hands on about revolutionary causes and revolutionary leaders, and one thing that always impressed me about the real revolutionary leaders of struggles was that they were always thin men. Never saw a fat one yet! I just deduced then that the fat ones never stuck because they worried too much about their stomachs. The little skinny ones didn't worry about missing meals. You could depend upon them. They would make sacrifices. I told this theory in the speech I made in Chicago.

Randolph asked me, "C.L., where in the devil did you get that from? I heard you make that speech in Chicago, where did you get it from?"

"Oh," I said, "I got part of it out of thin air. If one is going to rabble-rouse, one rabble-rouses! One won't tell the truth about everything. But then," I said, "I've seen pictures of Nehru and Gandhi." The leaders of the Communist Party then in the States were thin, and from what pictures of the European Communists I had seen in those days, they were thin.

So he said, "Well, you know, I have thought back on the real revolutionary leaders, leaders who made sacrifices. When I say revolutionary I mean those that paid the price and stuck, not necessarily that they led a revolution," he said, "and invariably they were thin! I had never paid that any attention. I had never noticed."

Incidentally, Randolph was an authority on revolutionary movements and causes. Again we are speaking of people who led militant organizations; some wound up in revolutions and some didn't! But he

Dellums: said now that he had thought about it, and looking back and doing some research work, invariably they were thin.

I remember when the Communist Party, I think for the first time, ran on the national ticket here in the States. Ben Gitlow was on the ticket for vice-president. I believe that William Z. Foster was the man's name that was on the ticket for president. But I remember Ben Gitlow because Foster was a thin man and Gitlow was fat. When Gitlow came to Oakland, they held a meeting at Tech High [School] and I went out. I love to hear those kind of people talk. They generally are able people; they make a good rabble-rousing speech. I went out and listened to Ben and the next time I saw Randolph, we were talking and I said, "Chief, you know Ben Gitlow is too damn fat. He isn't going to stay with it. He is going to be the first one of those Commies that turn. He's too fat."

Well, if you look up the history of the Communist Party of the United States you'll find Ben Gitlow turned. I believe he became a professional testifier for the House UnAmerican Activities Committee. In other words, he merely became a professional liar. He was the first one that tucked his tail and ran. A big, fat man. I don't know any of those thin guys to ever turn. They'd usually stick. That impressed me even more with Randolph.

Obviously there are exceptions. My late colleague Milton P. Webster is good enough proof for me. But then, you could just see integrity all over Randolph's face! I was just confident of him, sitting there looking at him and listening to him. This man will stick, I thought, and he will pay whatever price is necessary to pay. He'll never desert the cause.

So the next day I went over to his room. Negroes couldn't get into hotels then and the price kept us from making an issue of it, so all over the country there was some private home here and there where Negroes had a spare room, or they could double up and make one available. That's where you put the

Dellums: visiting dignitaries to stay. Randolph was staying in a house right around the corner here on Willow Street, right off of Seventh Street. I went down to see him the next day, sat in his room and talked with him there. I told him then that I had lined up with and had helped Dad Moore, to get the porters together.

JA: Dad Moore was a porter, too?

Dellums: Dad Moore was a retired porter and the custodian of the sleeping quarters that the Pullman Company maintained for "foreign" porters, men away from home, mostly Chicago men, Seattle men, Los Angeles, but mostly Chicago men. The Chicago men were the first ones to bring propaganda, that is, leaflets from the East. We got our first application blanks through them to see where to write to New York to the headquarters to get application blanks to start signing up porters into the Brotherhood. So I told Randolph that I was already active with Dad Moore, that I was helping him, and that I was convinced that "this is the movement and you are the man. So I'm just here to let you know that as long as you are leading it, at least, you have one advocate here in Oakland. I'll be with you." I've been with him ever since.

The Bonding Incident

Dellums: After I was fired, I knew something was wrong. I was suspicious of the guy that was in our little office as the secretary-treasurer. His name was D.J. Jones. He was a very tall fellow and he always sat back at his desk. The chairman and the vice-chairman of what was called the organizing advisory committee were at the front at a table. Henry West was the chairman; I was the vice-chairman. But Jones never came up to the table to give his financial report. He'd stand in back at his desk and he was far away from us! He was a tall fellow, and he would stand up and open a book and seemed to be reading his financial report from the book. When he finished reading, he'd close it up. I got

Dellums: suspicious about this Negro reading from this book and from a distance too. Then other things began to arouse suspicion. The Pullman Company seemed to know too much about us, too much about what went on in that office. Some of the things that the superintendent said to me when he discharged me that day, I don't recall what they were, were things that I knew somebody had to tell him. It had to be somebody on our committee or that guy in the office.

So at the next meeting of the committee I advocated that we appoint an auditing committee to audit the books. We did. I was on the committee. The chairman of the committee came before us at the next meeting and said, "I intend to give a report." He hadn't called the committee together. So I tore him apart on it: "You don't pull anything like that on me; what makes you think that I am going to trust you? That's why we have a committee of three!"

So we got into a big wrangle over it, and the outcome was that I wrote Randolph, gave him the story, and asked for authority to audit the books myself. Randolph got some letters urging him to stop me or something. So I got a letter from Randolph. He advised against it because it would wreck the morale. This might do more harm than good.

I wrote him right back and told him the full story. "Somebody doesn't want me around the books and I have reason to believe that not only is money being stolen but that this Negro is stooling for the Pullman Company. I want full authority to audit the books myself."

He sent me a telegram and gave me full authority to audit the books. Well, I guess due to lack of experience, I was suspicious of the three that were on the committee; I showed all three of them this telegram that day one by one. Then when I went down to the office the next day the secretary-treasurer didn't show up. I didn't have any keys, so I went over to his room. He was in the bed with the covers right up around his chin and he could hardly talk. He'd had a heart attack or something and he was

Dellums: whispering; he was so ill. I sat there looking at this bird in that bed and it dawned upon me that this bird was being too careful keeping his covers up around his neck and keeping his hands under the cover. I got suspicious; I thought, "this guy has got his clothes on; he has just gotten into bed because it took the landlady too long to let me in the house anyway." He was whispering all the time and he told me to take the keys to the office and his desk that were on the dresser. He told me to get the keys and keep everything going until he was well enough to come back to the office. I thought there was something suspicious about that so the next morning I went back by his room. The landlady told me he'd gone. "He's gone. Here," she said, "come into the room. He packed up everything. He left some time before day." I don't know which one of those three members of the committee tipped him off. There might have been three guilty parties instead of one. Anyway, I audited the books. I was able to prove, incidentally, that he was bonded. It was most unusual for Negroes in those days to bond people handling money. We were bonded for a thousand dollars.

I was able to prove it to the satisfaction of the U.S. Bonding Company and collected \$780, I think. I have a photostatic copy of the check that the bonding company paid the Brotherhood. You had to prove everything to their satisfaction because their man was in and out of the office, looking things over. The bonding official told me some months later that he hadn't been able to find another case in this country where Negroes had collected any money that any of their crooked officials had stolen. As a matter of fact he said that very few Negroes had their people bonded anyway. So with him coming by, talking with me periodically, it got so that he would talk freely. Finally he said, "You know, Dellums, I want to say something to you, but I don't want to insult you. So if I get out of line just stop me," he said. I said, "Go ahead, you're not going to insult me."

So then he told me about the Negroes not bonding their people and he said that he knew of some cases

Dellums: where they had been bonded and stolen some money, he said, but they pray and they forgive them and do not prosecute. I got tickled, you know? I said, "Is that what you're worried about insulting me?" I knew that. I don't know about the bonding, but I know that if they steal money generally they wind up with a prayer meeting, pleading on sympathy, and getting everybody emotional so that they will forgive them for it. Instead of putting them in jail, they'll forgive them. The bonding company told me that they'd get him. A couple of years later, the bonding man came by and said, "We spotted him."

"Where is he?"

"He's in southern California now," he said. "He went over into Mexico and finally he came back across the borders and he was down in El Centro. Now," he said, "He's in Los Angeles."

"What are you going to do, put him in jail?"

"Oh, no, no," he said, "We want our money. We're not going to get any money with him in prison. What we do when we finally spot these characters is watch them. Invariably, he's going to worm his way into another organization and more than likely he'll be handling books and money again; and then we'll move in on him. Let him get on his feet. Let him get pretty well established, when he won't want to be disgraced and humiliated. Then we'll move in on him and make him pay what he stole, everything it cost us--expenses and everything, plus interest."

So I said, "How much is it going to cost him?"

"Oh, about fifteen, sixteen hundred dollars. We'll move in on him and make him pay by the month."

But then you see with him running away, I had to round up the men in meetings and I'd tell them about it. The men had already asked me, when I first got discharged, could I stay, and how long could I get by without a job, to help straighten out the office and find out if there was something wrong.

Dellums: I told them, "Well, I haven't been married long and I have rented a house for the first time and have a little furniture in it. Obviously I had to buy it all on pistol terms--that's a little bit now and a little bit now and then--so I would have to go to work."

They said, "Do you think you can find out everything in ninety days?"

"I think I can." They said, "If you stay with us for ninety days and we pay your rent, can you get by for ninety days?" I said, "Yes, you pay for the house rent and I'll get by for ninety days. My wife's working. It's not much of a job but she's working. We can get by."

So they started "passing the hat" to take up a collection to pay my rent, which was twenty-five or thirty dollars a month. At the end of the first month the money got a little harder and harder to raise. After three months I told them to forget it! The secretary-treasurer had run away then, you see, so now they had another problem. He had been getting a token of appreciation from us. He had another job as nightwatchman, and we were paying him twenty dollars a month. So they asked me to take over and lead them and stay with them. I decided to do it and I took it for the twenty dollars a month. This salary remained the same until, I think, July of that year. After I collected this money from the bonding company, the men got together themselves in a meeting and they drafted a petition to Randolph about my salary, and that my work had to be appreciated. I couldn't continue to get by on twenty dollars a month, depending on my wife to feed us. So Randolph immediately answered back and raised my pay to twenty-five dollars a week.

JH: You became secretary-treasurer?

Dellums: Yes, I took over as secretary-treasurer. We let Dad Moore act as chairman and organizer. We didn't have a president, and an active porter couldn't be too active or they'd discharge him. Dad Moore was only able to carry on for less than five years after that. He was pretty old and his health got bad, and as it got worse I more and more took over. Dad was

Dellums: a wonderful man and I loved him like a father because he was a fighting, scrapping, vulgar old man! Everybody had great respect for him. So I virtually ran the show almost from the beginning.

JH: I'd like to ask you another question. In his book on the Brotherhood, Brailsford Brazeal voices the criticism of Randolph that he was not a porter himself and that he could not really empathize with the porters. And I was wondering, was Randolph able to understand the problems that mattered to many of the porters? He was an editor and never worked with his hands. Do you think he had a different outlook from the average porter?

Dellums: Yes, because, as you say, he never was a railroad man, but he wasn't always an editor. He has worked with his hands. Randolph had done some work as a young man growing up in New York, in Harlem. I think he ran an elevator once and worked a little while as a bellhop. I've forgotten now. He's named a few of the jobs that he had when he was agrowing up around there. But Randolph was an intellectual. Randolph was an unusually brilliant man. Randolph had one of the best minds any man ever had. He had almost a photographic memory and he was so well-educated--largely self-educated.

Two examples: Randolph had read every word in the Bible, and, I think, remembered it! I have seen him, on more than one occasion, when we'd get into a conversation or something with a minister. I never saw one yet that didn't pretty much run out of gas. Randolph had read every word printed up to then by Shakespeare. In his prime, I think, he remembered them also. He loves poetry and could recite poetry by the hour from memory. Yes, he was a very able man in his prime, and he still is good.

We did discover that he had trouble writing propaganda for porters. He didn't speak an ordinary man's language and therefore he couldn't write it. So I jumped him about it, and I'd point out to him that "most of the porters wouldn't know what you're talking about! They just don't understand.



On left, William Henry Dellums, father of C. L. Dellums, in the office of the insurance company he worked for briefly. Corsicana, Texas, c. 1914.



C. L. Dellums — high school picture taken in 1916 or 1917.



First Convention of Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in Chicago, September 15, 1929. L-r, first row: George Clark, secretary-treasurer, Chicago Division; A. Philip Randolph, International president; Milton P. Webster, head of Chicago Division and international vice-president; Dad Moore, Oakland; Miss Williams, stenographer, Chicago; Ashley L. Totten, international vice-president; Roy Lancaster, international secretary-treasurer. Second row: Ernest Smith, Chicago; George Grant, real estate broker, Los Angeles; Frank Boyd, secretary-treasurer, Minneapolis and St. Paul Division; Taylor Morrell, secretary-treasurer, Omaha Division; unknown; E. J. Bradley, international vice president; unknown; unknown; P. Caldwell, international vice-president; Mr. Pluckett, Chicago; Bennie Smith, international vice-president; unknown. Last row: unknown; unknown; Lonnie Hampton, secretary-treasurer Fort Worth, Texas; C. L. Dellums, international vice-president.



Bottom row, left to right: Ed Brown, Robert Inman, C. L. Dellums, President L. U. Broussard; second row: J. D. Stovall, John Robinson, A. T. Moore (recording secretary); back row: D. Akins, C. D. Williams, Clarence E. Young. All joined in 1925 and stayed with the union through dark days of persecution from the Pullman Company.

Oakland Division Executive Board, elected early 1930's. Left to right, first row: Ed Brown, Robert Inman, C. L. Dellums (president), L. U. Broussard; second row: J. D. Stovall, Johnny Robinson, A. T. Moore (recording secretary); back row: D. Akins, C. D. Williams, Clarence E. Young. All joined in 1925 and stayed with the union through dark days of persecution from the Pullman Company.

Dellums: You've got too many big words in here. You just don't use their language!" So for quite a while when Randolph wanted to get something out, he would send it to me and I would rewrite it for him. I didn't change anything. I'd just write it in my language, in everyday language, language that the working man could understand. As soon as I'd turn it in, he'd send it on. So it was just a question of a person who was just so far intellectually and educationally above the men he was leading, that he did have trouble communicating with the men in writing, particularly because people can understand what they hear much easier than they can understand what they read. No matter how many big words you use in talking, they'll sit there and listen to you and they'll know pretty much what you are talking about. But when they've got to read that on paper, you see, then they won't understand it at all, because they can't read well enough to understand it. So they wouldn't get enough out of it. After I started rewriting things for him like that, it was better.

JH: Did you ever rewrite anything for him that appeared in the Messenger?

Dellums: No. The only things that I ever rewrote for him were form letters going out to the entire membership. And he began to catch on, if we stayed after him. Once in a while he could write leaflets that didn't have to be rewritten. After years of working on it he could write leaflets. But generally if he was going to get out a form letter, why, we'd rewrite it for him, take out what the boys used to call "the six-bit words" and put in some "two-bit words" [laughing], you know, ten cent words.

The First Brotherhood Convention
[Interview 2 - January 13, 1971]

JH: Now the first Brotherhood Convention was held in 1929 in Chicago.

Dellums: Yes, in south Chicago in September of 1929, and none of the delegates there could be Pullman porters because the Pullman Company at that time did not recognize the mere existence of the Brotherhood and

Dellums: a porter would have been discharged had he gone. So most of the delegates had already been discharged by the Pullman Company. A few of them who were just interested in the Brotherhood had never been employed by the Pullman Company. Some were retired porters.

JH: This was your first real effort at organizing nationally or internationally?

Dellums: Yes. Up to that time we had just organized local unions all over the country under the leadership and guidance of A. Philip Randolph, and functioned, for practical purposes, as a national organization, but had not had a convention and had not legally nor officially elected Mr. Randolph or anyone else as leaders. They had just come about by appointment on the part of Mr. Randolph. So he called this convention in order that we could adopt a constitution and provide for officers and elect officers.

JH: You mentioned that he did the appointing. He did an awful lot of appointing after he officially became the president. He had a lot of power.

Dellums: Yes. We gave him practically unlimited powers even in the first convention, and it lasted for years. As a matter of fact we didn't make any attempt to curtail the powers of the international president until we began to realize that no one has a guarantee on life and if anything happened to Mr. Randolph we realized that there was no one alive we would trust to have the power that he exercised. We therefore gradually began to amend the constitution to take some of the power away from the international president. Then, as he got older we even went further and we amended the constitution to limit the powers of the president in almost every convention during the last nineteen years.

JH: Do you think that placing such a concentration of power in the president's hands helped the Brotherhood? I associated what I've read about the early Brotherhood days with the black church and the way we give to our ministers this kind of power. Do you think that that was somehow necessary?

Dellums: I think it was necessary, but I wouldn't make such a comparison because Randolph created the Brotherhood. He was the Brotherhood. I doubt that anyone else could have succeeded in developing and leading the Brotherhood and winning the fight besides Randolph. Then the love and admiration and respect that all of us had for him was beyond description!

We had no hesitancy in him having all the power. We knew he would not abuse it, would do nothing wrong. Nobody could have made anyone in the Brotherhood believe that he wasn't the purest man that ever lived. He was the same as the second coming of Jesus Christ to us. That never changed. We never curtailed the powers of the presidency because we were afraid of him abusing it or because he ever did abuse it. It was because time was passing; he was getting older and went through a period of quite a number of years of not being very healthy. So we knew we wouldn't trust anybody else. We wouldn't dare trust anybody else like that. So we talked with him and told him why we were doing it and wanted him to feel that it certainly wasn't aimed at his record nor him nor anything. He understood and went along with us.

JH: You were elected fourth vice-president. How were the vice-presidents elected?

Dellums: At our first convention in 1929 we elected seven vice-presidents, and we provided in the constitution that they were all equal. But the minute it was started we got into a hassle over the first vice-presidency in that first convention. The New York people nominated Ashley L. Totten for the first vice-president and the Chicago people nominated Milton P. Webster. So we got into a little hassle there. I pointed out to them that we had already adopted a constitution. From my interpretation of the constitution, numbers were insignificant. We were all equal and if I had not considered it that way I would have objected to it. Whether I would have won or not, I doubt it. But Mr. Randolph supported me in the idea, that we were all equal and numbers were insignificant. Totten then stood up and said, "Well, it seems to me that some people would just rather that numbers be used, with Webster's name first. It makes no difference to me.

Dellums: So let's go ahead and let Webster be number one, I'll be number two if we're going to use numbers at all. It's perfectly all right." And that settled it. It went along like that and we kept up with the numbers as we elected them, since we had determined already that we would divide the country up into seven zones and a vice-president would be over each zone. That's how they came about.

So most of the vice-presidents were easy to elect. But they held the Pacific Coast zone to the last because there was going to be a fight over that. C.L. Dellums had some--I hate to call them enemies, because besides Randolph, Totten, and Dad Moore, who was ill and in bed at the time, there was nobody else in that convention that had ever seen me before in their lives; so I couldn't really call them enemies because I believe that the man you don't like is the man you don't know. Since they didn't know me, they really had no basis for disliking me. But I had a reputation for being a hell-raiser par excellence and the reputation of fighting anybody--and it was well deserved; I could and still will fight anyone, including Mr. Randolph. They nominated someone against me.

JH: Who was that?

Dellums: They nominated first a man by the name of Frank Boyd, who resided in St. Paul, Minnesota. Then Frank stood up and declined on the grounds that it was rather silly to nominate him knowing that that vice-president supervised the Pacific Coast and he lived in the Twin Cities. Then they nominated a man who came to the convention from Los Angeles, a realtor, by the name of George Clark. He stood up and declined. He wanted to be a vice-president but he had gone to Mr. Randolph the night before and had certain conditions he wanted met. He wanted a certain guaranteed salary and Mr. Randolph had told him that he couldn't guarantee him that salary, although he appreciated his help in the Brotherhood since he had no connection in the railroad game, and that his preference for the supervisor of the Pacific Coast was C.L. Dellums. Therefore, since Dellums was the choice, this realtor from

Dellums: Los Angeles declined on that basis. Then the people who were spearheading this called for a recess. They got a recess in the convention and when we were reconvened they then nominated a man by the name of Lonnie Hampton from Forth Worth, Texas to run against me and he accepted. But obviously he was not successful.

Then one year later we had a convention in St. Louis, in 1930. My memory tells me that it was even smaller than the one in 1929. We reduced the vice-presidencies first in that convention because we had lost a couple of men and we had no men or money to replace them. We had no money; nobody was being paid properly, including Mr. Randolph. So we just abolished those positions.

Roy Lancaster

Dellums: The secretary-treasurer was put out. There had been an attempt made to unload him in 1929. His name was Roy Lancaster. Mr. Randolph put up a hard fight on the floor for Roy. But I had never seen Roy before that convention. Therefore I didn't know whether Roy was good or bad; but if Mr. Randolph wanted Roy, Roy was all right for me. I joined in the fight with Mr. Randolph and we had quite a fight. Those opposed to Lancaster wanted everybody to vote openly but I fought for and with Randolph's help got a secret ballot. We still only won by one vote for Roy. We would have lost with an open election. But in 1930 Mr. Randolph came to me and asked me not to make an issue of Roy's reelection because we couldn't win. He was convinced then that they were going to dump Roy and for the sake of the Brotherhood, not to make a fight of it because he wouldn't make it. He had talked to Roy and Roy knew that he couldn't win. But Roy wouldn't decline; so I told the Chief that if Roy wouldn't withdraw, I would make a fight about it. I would take the floor and "I will speak for Roy whether you do or not."

JH: He was being dropped merely because you didn't have sufficient funds?

Dellums: No, oh no. There was a lot of gossip about Roy Lancaster. Some said he was dishonest but there was no proof of anything that Roy had done. Now there were some things that Roy had done that could be publicly explained. I'd gone to Roy and I talked to him about them. Let me give an example.

The Depression had come on, and the Pullman Company had heat on us. They had discharged a lot of men, including me. They'd frightened the men away. We were having a hard time maintaining the organization. We needed money in New York and Roy was active in machine politics. He was in the Tammany Hall set-up. Tammany Hall in those days ran New York City. Roy put on a couple of benefits, benefits for the Brotherhood. He promoted a baseball game once that was in the Yankee Stadium, I think it was the Yankee Stadium at that time. It was the American League Baseball Park and owned by a big beer baron, Colonel Jake Rupert. I remember Roy telling me his name and that he couldn't be reached. No Negro seemed to have a chance to get anything put on in that park--for free, particularly. But Roy had enough connections to get that park and for just expenses of operating that park and put on a baseball game between two Negro teams. A lot of people came out to the game. But certain people, in the mid-West particularly and a few in New York, didn't like Roy running it by himself and they thought that more money should have been turned into the Brotherhood than was turned in. Roy explained to me and the Chief the things that had to be done when you were working in a machine political set-up like Tammany Hall. Thousands of free tickets were given to the press and politicians to get them to support it and to come out.

There were other events put on. I recall there was a race between BoJangles [Bill Robinson] and I believe Joey Ray was his name. Ray at that time was called the fastest human being alive. He held the record for the one hundred yard dash. Do you know who BoJangles was?

JH: I know the name.

Dellums: OK. BoJangles was the world's greatest tap-dancer. I don't think anyone has ever yet been his equal. He was a Negro, very dark; so he fitted into your category of black people. He was black. I knew him quite well personally as the years went on, but I won't give any personal opinion of BoJangles. He was a brilliant chap also, a very talented man. He was the world's greatest back runner--a champion in running backwards. He ran this race, an attraction there, with this great track star. They ran the one hundred yard dash, with BoJangles being given a fifty yard handicap to see if Joey could catch him before they reached the end of the one hundred yard dash. It was almost impossible to catch that fellow! The most amazing thing imaginable was to see him run backwards! I saw him run backwards on a platform up at Medford, Oregon once, I believe, against a college track team. I think they gave him a twenty yard handicap and he beat them! I don't recall how far they ran now; it's been a long, long time.

After the race between BoJangles and Joey Ray, Roy said to me, "Now, do you think that that white man came out there to run that race against that Negro just out of love for the Brotherhood? He's an amateur." He said, "You see, C.L., in these kinds of things there's a lot of money handed in the back and changed hands and you can't report it. You've got to trust somebody to do it. There was money passed out right and left to get that ball game put on in Yankee Stadium. Politicians don't do things just to help you. Nobody loves us. Therefore," he said, "I turned in every nickel that really was left out of it."

Now one final event. He put on a midnight benefit for the Brotherhood in one of the theatres in Harlem. There were people who participated in that benefit who never participated in a benefit before! Everybody that Roy really wanted to come out and make a contribution to that benefit and make it successful came. Now when Roy had chosen the theatre, he went to the owner of the theatre and asked that he let the Brotherhood use the theatre

Dellums: for free, but he refused to do it. Finally one day the city inspectors came out and inspected the theatre. They began to point out to this man what was wrong with his theatre and how much it was going to cost to repair it. There was nothing really wrong with the theatre but these city inspectors went out there and they threatened to close this theatre till the owner had met all these requirements. Finally the owner wanted to know "Why what's it all about?" So one guy said, "Well, a fine organization, a struggling organization like the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, a great leader such as A. Philip Randolph and a secretary-treasurer, Roy Lancaster--and you're opposed to those people!" Well the guy soon caught the message and he didn't have to make these repairs because Roy got the theatre free. Now that's an indication of the power of Tammany Hall and its connections in those days. That's why Roy wouldn't allow a committee to help him put on these benefits. He said it couldn't be done. We had to trust him to do it. That was his story.

But anyway, because people in the Brotherhood imagined, let's say, twenty-five thousand dollars to be turned in, and only four thousand maybe was turned in, they accused Roy and said he played poker and gambled off a lot of money. They assumed that he was stealing it and all kinds of things. So they were just determined to get him. In the 1930 convention, Mr. Randolph said, for the sake of the Brotherhood, to maintain harmony, Roy would have to be sacrificed. He still didn't believe Roy was dishonest.

Then Totten ran against Roy and was elected secretary-treasurer. Mr. Randolph voted for Roy and stated openly in the convention that he was for Roy and that he would cast his vote for Roy; and I made a speech for him. But we lost.

JH: What were some of the things that you had to do on the Pacific Coast to raise money? Were you doing big things like throwing benefits? Was that your job as vice-president?

Dellums: Well, the job really was to organize the porters into the Brotherhood.

JH: And what about raising funds?

Dellums: That was something that some of us did in various places, just largely to maintain the regional set-up. It wasn't done for international purposes at all. No, that was only done in New York. We generally raised a little money by putting on a couple of dances a year, because in those days an organization with prestige could give a dance with local musicians and people would come out. Otherwise, certain people would only go to invitational social events for dances and not to what's called "a public dance." The Brotherhood had good prestige and we always got a good crowd for a public dance.

The number one dance hall in Oakland in those days was known as "Sweet's Ballroom." They weren't willing to rent it to us. Negroes weren't welcome in Sweet's Ballroom then (that's another story). But we used it just the same. I remember Sweet telling me about Negroes and knives. He couldn't afford to have any cutting going on in there. Just the week before at a so-called "white dance," there was a shooting and a cutting in Sweet's Ballroom and not a Negro was in there!

So when I rubbed that into him, he backed up and let us use his ballroom--and at a reasonable price, because I wouldn't pay more than other people paid for anything! I told him, "I don't pay color taxes, if I can avoid it. When you charge me more than you charge white people, you're charging me a color tax and I don't like color taxes. I've paid too much in color tax that I can't avoid. I won't pay them when I can get around it."

JH: It seems it was difficult for Negroes to get into unions. I imagine that they didn't have very many of their own before the Brotherhood was organized.

Dellums: They didn't have any. The Brotherhood was the first international union ever organized and led by a Negro, and the only one that succeeded over the opposition of the employer. When the Pullman Company

Dellums: signed that first agreement in 1937, it was the first and only case in the history of this nation where Negroes showed a powerful white corporation where to sign--and they signed against their will!

Now we were accused on the floor of the AF of L once of heading an all-black organization. We could organize only the porters that the Pullman Company employed and up to then they had employed Negroes only as porters. Later they employed some Mexicans, a few, but several hundred Filipinos as porters and attendants. They all became members of our union.

I might also add that because of our involvement in the racial struggles, Randolph and I knew that the Brotherhood had a great racial impact. It was a part of Randolph's great desire to rejuvenate the civil rights revolution which he was preaching fifty years ago, so we refused to accept money from white people to save it when it was almost dying. We determined that this was one fight that Negroes would win. As a matter of fact, Randolph, Webster and I joined hands once in the dark and starving days to resolve that we would let no honorable sacrifice prevent us from keeping the Brotherhood alive. I recall kidding Randolph and saying, "Well, there's only one word you used that I don't like, and that's 'honorable.'" We laughed about it. "Because if there's anyway under the sun to keep the Brotherhood alive on the Pacific Coast, I'm going to keep it alive. I don't know how honorable I'll be in doing it," I said, "but I'm going to keep it alive!" We kidded about it, but we did pledge ourselves that we would win this fight or we'd report to our God the reason why. We'd win it with Negro leadership and with Negro money! And we did!

The American Federation of Labor

JH: When did the Brotherhood join the AF of L?

Dellums: In 1929. Randolph's annual fight on the floor of the convention of the AF of L to get union color clauses removed became the highlight of the conventions. In due time it became the headline, the front page news. Up to then, the only time a Negro got on the front page of a newspaper was when he was lynched or accused of some crime. Year after year the debate became more intense and Randolph's speech on the floor of the convention of the AF of L was run in the major newspapers around the world. Foreign correspondents began to cover it and wait for it. I feel confident that Randolph was, in his prime, the greatest orator that ever lived.

With a wonderful voice, his great oratorical ability, his wonderful, unbelievable knowledge, his mastery of the English language, he had no peer. People at the AF of L convention who fought against him were so far beneath him that they were conscious of it themselves. I think most of them developed an inferiority complex. A lot of them would sit on their hands. They didn't have courage enough to get up and take the floor against him because they knew that they were no match for him. They didn't have the skill nor the ability. So by hitting the front pages of the daily newspapers, and by Randolph being the greatest attraction in the race, the Brotherhood won support of Negroes and general recognition.

When Randolph went to a city to make a speech, the Negroes turned out in record numbers. It was common for overflow crowds to go out to hear Randolph. Of course we couldn't use huge auditoriums in those days like we can now, although the Brotherhood did eventually break up some of that.

The Brotherhood became a part of the labor movement and advocated that Negroes join the labor unions and encouraged them to join. Many of them thought that they couldn't join unions that they could join and didn't try because of the general

Dellums: belief that the AF of L discriminated against Negroes.

JH: Since the AF of L had a bad reputation among Negroes, why did the Brotherhood join it?

Dellums: Well, the Brotherhood took a vote in 1928 that they would strike the Pullman Company. That event was a world-shattering event because up to then Negroes were butts of jokes. Pullman porters were the most noted of all. Negroes were never really looked upon as ordinary working men. The fact that here was a handful of Negroes threatening a nationwide strike against one of the nation's most powerful industrial institutions was kind of earthshaking almost. Everybody would have believed it impossible under any other leadership but A. Philip Randolph's. But with Randolph, they knew this meant something.

There was a law (it would be another story to tell our experience under it) that we complied with, in taking a strike vote. It was a federal law, The Railway Labor Act, and under it the National Board of Mediation should have declared an emergency. This emergency would have empowered the President of the United States to appoint an emergency board to settle the dispute and prevent the strike. The Board of Mediation ruled that it had not created an emergency. Under this ruling, the President was helpless and we found ourselves facing this powerful Pullman Company without any help and all alone, and we obviously couldn't win because we had no money. We had to find a way out. So Randolph and William Green got together. Green sent us a long telegram and asked us to call off the strike and said the AF of L would sit down and work out some method of cooperation to help us and there would be another time coming. I don't remember all the wording of it, but we took Green's advice. But we didn't call the strike off; we postponed it while we conferred with the AF of L.

Out of these conferences Randolph held with Green and other members of the Executive Council, we decided to accept thirteen federal local charters from the AF of L in order to become an actual

Dellums: affiliated part of it. But we didn't affiliate all of our local unions. We just picked out thirteen. We had an understanding with them then that we would not pay the full per capita tax on our full membership. We had an unwritten agreement with them that we wouldn't even operate like normal federal locals; we would continue to operate as we were. We would operate as a national union with Randolph at the head of it and without any interference from them.

JH: I'm sure that AF of L leaders knew that there were some unions that would not allow blacks in their union.

Dellums: Oh, it was no secret.

JH: And yet they wanted you in the federation. Why do you suppose they did?

Dellums: Well, there was one expression that I objected to and that was, "The AF of L discriminates against Negroes." I remember hearing many Negro leaders saying it. Walter White made a statement publicly that the AF of L discriminated against Negroes. That was not a true statement, and Walter knew better. I have described the AF of L as an old-time Baptist convention. Why did the Baptist church hold conventions? I'm not up on the Baptists of today so I don't know; they may have changed. But in my day, each Baptist Church was an independent entity by itself and that minister had no obligation to anybody but his own flock. So why did they have a convention then? The convention was largely to keep the faith before the public and they had to sell it to the public. Well, that was the AF of L. The AF of L was a federation of independent, autonomous unions and the national officers had no power over any of them. If they didn't like any action taken by the national convention of the AF of L, they could walk out.

The last time John L. Lewis and the United Mine Workers walked out, the telegram they sent was a noted one. It just so happened that they were in San Francisco and when they walked out that day and didn't show up the next morning, Green got a

Dellums: telegram addressed to him and it said, "We disaffiliate," signed John L. Lewis. Just that brief. You see, AF of L leaders had no power over anybody, and couldn't force them to do anything. They weren't about to try to put anybody out because of their racial discrimination--oh no. There were too many unions always out. Oh gosh, I think the machinists quit it probably five times in their history. Carpenters have quit several times. Several unions quit, even though with that, we still fought against discrimination. We still tried to get the AF of L, as such, in a national convention to take action to expel a union found guilty of racism; and if it had open racial discrimination, they were guilty. Of course they weren't going to do that. We knew that. But a lot of things you have to keep fighting against, and it's going to take years to bring about a climate where it may be done. That climate isn't here yet! But we're close to it.

So just to say that the AF of L discriminated isn't fair, because the AF of L is nothing but a convention of autonomous, independent organizations. Negroes made the charge that the AF of L discriminated after the Brotherhood was in and surely our Brotherhood never discriminated against anybody. When they made that charge the carpenters' union was in there; the carpenters' union always had thousands of Negroes in it. There were any number of unions in there that didn't discriminate against Negroes. Oh, I would estimate that when we went in, about half of the unions in there had color clauses in their constitutions or rituals, and many of the others that didn't have them in there practiced it right on. But we affiliated with the AF of L because it was the mainstream of the labor movement and, as a labor organization, we belonged in the mainstream.

We went in with a mission and for a reason. The reason we went in was because we were a labor union and we were part of the labor movement and we knew that, to go back to the old saying, "You can't fix what's wrong inside of a house by standing out on the sidewalk criticizing it." You've got to get in there and find out what it's all about and root it out. We joined because we sincerely believed,

Dellums: and I still believe, that the Negro will never come into his own until he is a complete, total part of the mainstream of American life and all of its tributaries. The labor movement is certainly one of the mainstreams of American life. Our mission was to drive discrimination out. That is why we started that annual fight against those unions that still had color clauses in their constitutions or rituals, and we succeeded, to that extent. We forced every one of them to remove it.

JH: Do you want to name some of those unions?

Dellums: The Culinary Workers International Union. It was a main target of ours because Negroes were noted for culinary work. It's a long name; the right name I believe now is the Hotel and Restaurant Employees International Union and International Bartenders League of America. It was dominated (I don't think it is now) for many, many years by the bartenders. The bartenders were the most discriminatory of all! Now they had a color clause in their constitution even when they chartered some Negro locals! A few dining car cooks and waiters locals went in in the early twenties. They chartered these Negro local unions, even though they had a color clause in the constitution. Now I give the leaders credit who took them in. They might have thought that would be a step forward in getting the color clause removed.

I recall the international association of machinists was a vicious group, and they were one of the ones whose leaders would take the floor against us at the conventions. Years later in Birmingham, Alabama, of all places, they took some Negroes into their local and they interpreted the constitution themselves that "white" in the constitution meant character and not skin color! When I pointed that out to some machinists locals in Los Angeles, they took the position that, hell, if Birmingham, Alabama, could do that, they could too. So they took in Negroes in Los Angeles. All those things did help of course to make them remove the color clause. But in the early days when Randolph, Webster and I were carrying on this fight, we were ignored in the conventions. Very few delegates spoke to us. I don't think that, during all the

Dellums: years of this fight, more than six of them would take the floor against us. There'd be three or four; the next year maybe two, three. Different ones and some of the same ones would fight. But I saw the time come that many of those unions would come to us as soon as our resolution was introduced and ask us not to name their union in the resolution. They promised that they were working on it and that they would get the color clause out as soon as they could. But of course, we didn't yield to them. We continued to name them until they removed the race clauses.

I recall one fellow named George M. Harrison, recently deceased. He was the international president of what was then called "The Railway Clerks." It's a long name: Railway and Airline Clerks, Freight Handlers and Station Employees, but it was always called "The Railway Clerks." George was the head of it for many years. He came to us and asked us not to name his union. Of course we told him we'd do it just the same. George said that he wanted to tell us that he was as bitterly opposed to discrimination as any white man could be. He started to say as much as we were, but he thought he was going too far. He said if he could get it out, he would. He was afraid to lead the fight to remove the color clause because his union was organized in Atlanta, Georgia. It was still dominated too much by Southerners. If he led that fight, he would lose his own position, and that wouldn't help any. We wouldn't agree.

My position was that a man is not a labor leader who yields for fear of what will happen to him personally. My position was that a leader of that kind is a marcher in the front row but he is not leading. He's just marching along in the front row with the rest of the members.

Finally, one year, George told us what he was going to do. He got one of his vice-presidents to introduce a resolution to remove the color clause and to lead a fight for it. Not only did he lose the fight, but he was defeated for reelection himself. So that shows, you see, the climate has got to be changed. There's just a lot of things

Dellums: that've got to be done to bring our people around to the point to where they will agree that the color of your skin is insignificant. He pledged to us then, "I will keep on working on it. Some day we'll remove it." And he was one happy man when the color clause was removed from his organization.

William Green was criticized quite often. William Green didn't have near as much power as George Meany has now under the new set-up in the combined AF of L-CIO. William Green had very little power. William Green was nothing but the mouthpiece for the Executive Council. The Executive Council was dominated by the building trade unions and the majority of those unions discriminated in those days openly and had color clauses in their constitutions or rituals. Green personally was opposed to discrimination and he made his contribution by coming to the Brotherhood's conventions every year to make a major speech at a public meeting on Sundays and by going to the various affiliated union conventions and making speeches to them, trying to convince the unions that they ought to remove those color clauses themselves, that they were wrong. Now that's the contribution William Green was making. But that was never in newspapers, he got no publicity on that. I know that if Bill could have forced the unions to remove the color clause, he would have forced them to do it. Then when you look at Bill Green's background-- Bill Green came from the miners union. He was part of the John L. Lewis set-up. John L. Lewis' union certainly didn't discriminate against Negroes. Our organization never had a better friend in the labor movement than John L. Lewis. John L. Lewis would have financed our organization to keep us from going down in the darkest of days, if we had allowed him to do it. But we didn't let John L. finance it.

JH: Did you spend a lot of time working to abolish discrimination in unions here on the West Coast?

Dellums: Not as such, because we were tied up in the national fight, and we knew of course that the local union had to carry out the mandates of its international constitution. As long as these

Dellums: international unions had these color clauses, the local union was handicapped. The first breakthrough that I can recall was the machinists' breakthrough that I told you about. But that reminds me of something I must tell you about here.

You know as a result of all of this agitation on the machinists union, one year in their convention (I don't know why they did it) they changed the constitution. Under the machinists' constitution, for years every member took a pledge that he would not propose for membership in that union anyone other than a sober, white, industrious machinist. Now they amended the constitution that year and took out the "sober." Now that is the truth. When we found that out, then did Randolph bring down the house in his speech opposing discrimination that year! We'd introduced resolutions to force the unions to remove the color clauses or to put them out. That was the fight always: put them out if they don't do it! Then we exposed the "progress" made by the machinists. And it was built up, you know, as if we were about to tell something important, as if they'd removed the color clause; but instead Randolph told about them removing the "sober" out of it. This wasn't general knowledge, had never been published or anything--and the laughter! The ridicule just humiliated them! It didn't make too much difference about the guy as long as he was white. They removed the "sober," so that meant you didn't have to be sober any more to be a machinist. You just had to be white! [Laughs]

I would say that probably in New York and California, the local labor leaders were very proud when internationals began to remove color clauses and to give them a chance to show their true mettle. I think they were very proud.

The 1937 Agreement with the Pullman Company

JH: What did you mean earlier when you said that the Pullman Company signed the 1937 Agreement against their will?

Dellums: They refused to recognize our existence for ten years. Then when they were forced to deal with us, we proposed a working agreement and it took two more years, mostly with a federal mediator, to get an agreement out of them. They weren't at all happy when the time came to sign. That is why I say they signed against their will. That is why I use the expression, we showed them where to sign. The agreement was signed on August 25, 1937, the twelfth anniversary of our union.

JH: What benefits did you get from the agreement? Were you satisfied with it?

Dellums: Well, no. No real representative--a word I usually use rather than leader--is ever satisfied with what he gets out of any negotiations because he never gets everything that he wants and everything that he demands. But to know the conditions under which the porters worked and then to compare that with the agreement which we secured in 1937--it was revolutionary.

JH: Could you name just briefly those things that were established in that agreement?

Dellums: I think the most important thing of all was that it established the Pullman porter as a human being and a worker and gave him some respect and some rights that the owners and managers of the Pullman Company, and even the traveling public itself, had to respect! Up to then, Negroes didn't have such rights. On top of that, there was no regulation of the hours a porter worked. He worked the hours that the Pullman officials decided they wanted the run to entail and he had no voice over it. It established the standard eight hour day and the 240 hour month. It also provided for some overtime if you ran over that. It provided to guarantee a porter's lay-over rest period. If they worked him on his rest period, they had to pay him extra for it. Those rights he

Dellums: never had before. It provided a nominal pay increase at the same time. Without checking back in that old agreement, I think it was a twelve dollars a month increase. But when you combine it with the limit on work and everything, it cost the company far more than an average of twelve dollars a month per man--far more.

III ALAMEDA COUNTY LABOR

JH: After that agreement was signed, did you turn your attention toward labor here in Alameda County? I notice that in 1936 you were elected to the Executive and Arbitration Board in Alameda County's Central Labor Council.

Dellums: I had been involved in the local labor movement before we signed this agreement. Soon after we became chartered by the AF of L, I became active in the labor movement and was a delegate to the Central Labor Council. By 1936 I was one of the best known labor men in the county.

The county Central Labor Council is the official body of delegates of the various unions in the organized labor movement that are affiliated with the AF of L, now the AF of L-CIO. Richard Groulx is the executive officer now in Alameda County.

JH: Was this election in 1936 that I've heard about just a re-election?

Dellums: No, I had never run for an office of any kind before. I wasn't even certain of the year. I thought it was before '36. I think Bob Ash once told me that it was 1936. He got elected to a committee that same year and that's how he remembered it. He remembered me because I was the Negro. He didn't say that but I think that is how. I didn't remember Bob Ash until years later when he became the head of the Labor Council himself. He brought it up in a bar, I think, in Sacramento. He brought it back to mind.

JH: You were the only Negro on the council?

Dellums: No, Ishmael Flory was in then, representing the Dining Car Cooks and Waiters. When I went to the election that night I recall there were two leaflets in each chair, and each gave a full slate of candidates. One was called, I think, the progressive slate. The other one was called the administration slate. Nobody said anything to me about running on this slate. As I recall, the tickets were put together by a committee. Nowadays we nominate one week and then elect the next week. But in those days slates were put together in caucuses. So when I looked at these two slates, my name was on the administration slate for what then was called the Executive and Arbitration Board. Then I looked at this progressive slate and nearly everybody that I fought with weekly there--we fought together on the same side--was on that slate. But my name wasn't on it.

While I was looking at it, three or four fellows came over to me and they were surprised. They spoke to me about it. I told them I didn't know any more about it than they did. Nobody said anything to me about it. Then one fellow spoke up and said, "Well, the progressives had a caucus and they decided against you." So I said, "Why?" He said, "Well, you're not progressive enough to go on our slate." I won't use the language to you that I used to him then, because I was a very hot-headed man. I've worked hard all my life trying to control it. I still haven't controlled it entirely. But I turned on him like a flash and I told him, "Let me tell you damn Commies something, every damn one of you, I'm more progressive than most of you Commies ever will be! You don't want me on your ticket because you can't control me. I'm not a stooge and you know it and I'll tell you off as quick as I would anybody else and I'll fight you as quick as I will anybody else. And when I say fight, you can choose the weapons and you know I mean it!" Then I turned and walked away from them and that was that. So the administration ticket won, of course.

But I guess '36 is correct because the CIO-AF of L split came right after that and the charter

Dellums: was lifted; so I was, in so many words, dumped, along with all of the so-called militants on the council. The Central Labor Council charter was lifted and the Central Labor Council was broken up.

JH: The charter was lifted because of the CIO-AF of L split?

Dellums: Because of the AF of L-CIO split largely. But that wasn't really all of it. There had been some trouble in the Teamsters Local 70. The Teamsters had been thrown into receivership--that is, the international leadership had taken over and had abolished all of the local officers in the Teamsters Union, and the international president appointed Charlie Real as the conservator to run the local. Charlie Real was the executive officer of the teamsters at the time. They abolished everybody else for practical purposes except him. Then he named all the officers he wanted to work with him while it was under international control. He removed all of the delegates from the Central Labor Council and he named some new delegates.

Well, the teamster delegates to the Central Labor Council had been elected by the membership and by secret ballot and so there were two or three bitter fights in the Central Labor Council over it. We refused to unseat our delegates in order to seat some people that had been appointed by Charlie Real because we considered them stooges of Charlie's. And we wouldn't seat them. Finally a man came out representing William Green, President of the AF of L, with instructions to us to unseat those delegates and to seat the new Teamsters' delegates or--this man's name was Watson--as he told us, "If you don't do it, I'm going to walk out with the charter!"

So the three or four of us who generally led the fights blasted away at it. It was my position that we were better off to remain united without a charter than to sacrifice our principles and be split and have a charter. I believe the charter was restored to the council after about six months, but not all of the old delegates were allowed back, including me. I think this was in 1937.

JH: Now where do the Communists come in? Were they with the Teamsters?

Dellums: No, no. They were just other delegates from various unions. They were infiltrating the labor movement in those days and there were a number of delegates in there that I believed were Communists. Now I've never even seen a Communist membership card in my life!

JH: I've heard that labor was often supported by Communists.

Dellums: Oh yes, and we know that they played a major role in the sit-in strikes and in helping the CIO get developed. We knew, and John L. Lewis knew, that they were doing it! It was my opinion that John L. knew what he was up against, the same as I knew what the Brotherhood was up against. We not only had the handicap that all workers had in the twenties in trying to organize a union, but we had the additional handicap of being Negroes. Therefore, I would accept help from anybody. I knew Commies were helping us at various times, that is, people I believed were Communists. I might have been naïve or egotistical, I don't know, but I had enough confidence in myself to believe that they could not outsmart me, and that I would use them while they were hoping to use me. I think that time has proven that I was right. They finally gave up and let me alone.

JH: In 1936 Earl Warren was DA of Alameda County. What was his relationship to labor?

Dellums: Earl was a good DA and generally well-liked, but the militants in the labor movement didn't like him. There were no Negroes in his office and no Jews. I went on more than one delegation to his office to argue with him about it and finally Miller came along; he was Jewish.

JH: Are you speaking of Nathan Harry Miller?

Dellums: Yes. He was Jewish, active in the labor movement. He'd become a lawyer. So some of us got together and started talking. My memory isn't very good at

Dellums: all on who the leader of that was, but I know that we decided to make a dodge, trying to at least get this Jewish fellow in the DA's office. Miller had a name that was just not considered Jewish by everybody. Until this day, I am sure many of us felt that if his name had been Cohen or something, we might not have gotten Warren to put him in. But by his name being Miller, he went in. Now I may be unfair to Earl to say he wouldn't have put him in otherwise; I don't know.

JH: This was the Alameda County Central Labor Council. A group out of that worked toward getting Miller in?

Dellums: Yes.

JH: What was your role in the Oakland General Strike of 1934?

Dellums: I had no policy making part. I have not sought nor held any office in the Central Labor Council since the charter was lifted in the nineteen thirties. I have been just a delegate supporting the action.

I served on the executive committee of Alameda County Labor Political Committee for quite a number of years.

JH: Were you aware of Earl Warren's role in the 1934 strike?

Dellums: I don't remember Earl Warren's role but, as a public official, he had to oppose such action.

JH: I see. Can you now tell me about the Tom Mooney rally held in 1939 at which I believe you spoke?

Dellums: Yes. I'm sure there has been enough printed about Tom Mooney and the Mooney-Billings Case. Warren Billings is still living. He was at the last AF of L-CIO convention in San Francisco last summer, and as soon as he hit the building he was looking for me. He came over. We've been friends since back in those days.

We carried out this fight for years to get Tom Mooney out of prison. He was innocent.

Dellums: Governor Olson, in running for governor in 1938, was the first candidate for governor to make it a part of his platform that one of his first official acts would be the freeing of Tom Mooney. Olson was elected. After he was sworn in in January, 1939, we let it stay a little while, and then we began to jump on him about freeing Tom. We thought he was putting it off too long. But to stick more to the subject of the meeting, we succeeded in getting Governor Olson to issue a pardon to Tom Mooney.

Some of our labor people went to San Quentin with the pardon, got him, and brought him out in a car. I was not in that group, but we decided that Alameda County would be the logical and best place to hold the mass meeting to welcome Tom Mooney back to the labor movement and back to freedom. We decided to hold the meeting in the Oakland Auditorium. Alameda County labor people got together in a special meeting--I don't even remember where the meeting was held now--to arrange for this rally to welcome Tom back, and I was the unanimous choice of all of these labor people at this meeting to be the master of ceremonies at the rally.

JH: Do you think that there was any special reason that you were chosen?

Dellums: It's always difficult to say how much of a part race played in those things in those days. It is easier now. Some things are done now because we are Negroes. Damn few things were done then because we were Negroes. They were done in spite of us being Negroes!

But being a Negro and so conscious of the racial struggle and then having to be in this fight for the Brotherhood which was more racial than a trade union, I had become quite a rabble-rouser. I think that was the kind of speaker they wanted. I think that Josh Rose, who is now on the city council, once said that in his day he'd been to thousands of meetings but the best master of ceremonies he had ever seen was C.L. Dellums. I was asked to chair meetings quite often for many, many years because they never got out of hand--I had that

- Dellums: reputation--and my meetings never died. I've even chaired meetings where something happened to the principal speaker and he couldn't show up. I'd make a speech myself, so the meeting never went flat. And then my activity in the whole campaign tour to get Tom out of prison was all a part of why they asked me. Therefore it was just a combination of reasons. Some guy got up and said, "I think the one labor leader now in Alameda County who should have the privilege and the honor and who is the best qualified on top of it to handle this meeting is Brother Dellums." Everybody seconded it and that was it. It was just like a steamroller; only it was unanimous. So I presided over the meeting and of course made a very short introductory talk, as a chairman should.
- JH: You said that you knew Billings personally--did you know Tom Mooney personally?
- Dellums: Well, obviously I didn't know either one of them before they got out of prison. I never got to know Tom well.
- JH: I heard that because Tom Mooney became the symbol of liberalism, that perhaps this went to his head. I don't know whether it was after or before he got out of prison.
- Dellums: The reference is to after he got out and not before. I don't agree with that. I've heard it but my interpretation of the matter was that Tom had been in jail, I believe, from 1918 to 1939. You would have to do a lot of research to see the difference in the two worlds. There were no aeroplanes flying all over in 1918. The streets weren't cluttered with automobiles in 1918. All the automobiles I ever heard of in 1918 had to be cranked and it was hard and dangerous--oh, it was just a different world. Most of Tom's contemporaries were gone. They had either retired or died. The labor movement was run, controlled, and dominated largely by a group of people my age then. We were probably twenty years younger than Tom. On top of how the world changed, Tom really was just lost. He was out of place. Tom's ideas just didn't fit in! So I don't think that there was anything that had gone to his

Dellums: head as much as it was that the world had moved away from him because of his incarceration. And his health wasn't good. He was a living example of "you can't stand still, because the world will move away from you," even if you are forced to stand still like he was. It looked like he went backwards. He didn't go backwards, he was standing still! Obviously, he was standing still, confined in prison, spent a lot of time in solitary, until the world had just moved away from him. So overnight he's freed and is let out into an entirely different world. Harry Bridges was on the scene then. Harry spoke of that meeting when we got Tom out, incidentally. Harry Bridges' world and Tom Mooney's world were as far apart as the earth and moon!

JH: This really took place as sort of a celebration of his getting out?

Dellums: Yes. He was already pardoned and they brought him back to Sacramento when they got him out of San Quentin, of course. They got some publicity for the governor. We didn't have television, but we had some radio on it. From there they flew Tom to Oakland. Then they brought him to the auditorium for this big meeting to welcome him back to the labor movement and to freedom!

He didn't realize that he really wouldn't fit in as a leader, like he was when he left. I think it is contrary to the fact to say that he became swell-headed. I know people came to me and, in the short time he lived after he got out, would tell about the disagreements they had with him. But to me the problem was that it was just a different world for him.

Warren Billings, being a younger man, went on to work. He's been a member of unions ever since. He was a delegate to the state federation conventions many times and may be this year. That's how he came looking me up, because he had names of people who had been so helpful or active so long in getting him out. He came up and introduced himself to me once many years ago in one of the conventions just to express his appreciation for the part I played. Then from time to time we'd run into one another

Dellums: through all these years. If I see him, I go to him; if he sees me, he'll come to me. That's how I mean we've been friends, not socially intimate friends. We just feel close to one another.

JH: What statements did Earl Warren make about the Tom Mooney case?

Dellums: I do not recall Warren making any statements concerning the Mooney case.

In Alameda County I never felt that any of the leaders that we've ever had at the head of the Central Labor Council of Alameda County were personally discriminatory. When we first went in there, I think the most able man that's ever headed our labor council here was named William Spooner. I went to Bill Spooner in 1928 when we threatened to strike the Pullman Company, because I didn't know anything about strikes. I didn't know anything about how to organize or conduct a strike; yet I was determined to win the strike, as far as Oakland was concerned. So I went to Bill Spooner (he was the head of the Central Labor Council) to get advice and all. That's another story as to who he sent me to and how I got charges filed against me with Randolph as being a Communist because of the people that I worked with in getting ready for a strike. But Bill Spooner sent me to them. I believed, later, that they were Communists, but they were all right with Bill.

He sent me to the best people he knew, the most skillful that he knew, to organize and carry on a strike. The only thing that I can say about them is that the day before the strike they assured me that trains may leave the West Oakland yards, but they'd never reach the boats. We didn't have bridges across the Carquinez Straits and the trains had to be broken up and put on ferry boats and ferried across the Carquinez Straits. They were going on to Sacramento, north, and/or east. That's what they meant by saying the trains would never get to the boats. They may leave the yards but they'd never reach the boats.

Dellums: So that was fine with me. I didn't want to know what would happen to them--didn't care! I was determined to win the strike. These people had arranged for soup kitchens. They just set this thing up for me so that any of the porters caught here wouldn't starve, they wouldn't suffer for anything. We'd have provided places for them to sleep (these were foreign porters, away from home; they would have been caught if the strike had gone on). We were certain to succeed here in Oakland. Our porters here and their families were roused up so that they would do anything I said do.

So Spooner was okay and so was the young man that was the president of the council, Mr. Fee. (Both Spooner and Fee have been dead quite a number of years now.) Fee was a young man in those days and he had to preside during all those rough days before the split between the AF of L-CIO came along.

Bob Ash was all right. I don't know where Bill Spooner was from, but Bob Ash is a Texan, a Southerner! And Bob was all right. I think that Bob was personally opposed to discrimination. He proved that in helping us in the fight for FEPC. There were some people in the labor movement whom I didn't have too much confidence in. They treated me all right. I got along with them but I felt they were rather shallow, and behind my back I wouldn't have trusted them.

IV OAKLAND LOW-COST HOUSING

JH: Shall we talk about the low-cost housing in Oakland that began in the New Deal days?

Dellums: Well, originally the city could participate in permanent low-cost housing by adopting an enabling resolution to participate and then set up the Housing Authority to work on it. But the city could not get in on it otherwise. Now the federal law provided that a local municipality could get in on the program by adopting a motion, a resolution on its own volition. A city would have to consider it upon a petition signed by a certain number of local residents. I am not too certain of how many signatures were required, but it was a small number, because with no trouble we could get it signed in thirty minutes almost. It was only twenty-five or something like that. It was a very small number.

The Oakland City Council would not consider an enabling resolution. So I started to lead demonstrations in city council meetings through Labor's Non-Partisan League, because my strength was in the labor movement and it was where I could get a crowd. City Hall then was looked upon as the jail house, because the jail was on the 13th floor of City Hall and Negroes didn't like to go where the jail is, apparently; it is hard to get them down there. But I knew that in the labor movement that I could get an audience so I raised the issue in Labor's Non-Partisan League and that is how we started to go in before the city council to demand that they consider an enabling resolution for low-cost housing and to go on record on it.

Dellums: We usually had three speakers. The Oakland League of Women Voters was excellent in backing us, in those days. The chairman of them would always speak; I've forgotten that wonderful lady's name. And one of the other fellows, as I recall, from the League--our political association--would speak. Then I would close it up. I'd introduce the other speakers and make the closing remarks myself. Everytime we went down, we took a bigger and bigger crowd. We were getting more and more to go. One strategy we used was getting down there early and cluttering up at the door so when they unlocked the door to the council chambers, all our people would crowd in. So the whole audience was with us then. Everytime we went down there, at least 90% of the people down there demonstrating were white. We always had a hard time getting Negroes to do down and participate in those days. So finally we went down one night and I went to sign up to speak and the city clerk wouldn't let me sign up. He said, "Oh, no, you're not going to speak tonight, nobody will hear you."

So I said, "Okay, I'll find out, since when did my city, Oakland, go fascist." And I turned and started to walk away and he grabbed me.

He said, "Come back here, man. Don't you know I'm ribbing you." [Laughing]

I saw he was smiling. So I walked back to him and said, "What goes?"

He said, "Well you are still not going to sign up and you are not going to speak," he said, "because they are going to do it tonight. So just sit down and watch." So sure enough they not only considered it, they voted it over!

Then we got going on the low income housing, but that's a little story by itself because we had a lot of problems in getting the Campbell Village started. Because they put two big shots on the Housing Authority (I don't think they knew the directions to West Oakland). When I went to the office of the realtor who was given the contract to make the appraisals, I started to go back out-- I thought I went into the wrong place; it looked

Dellums: like a bank. I'd never been in anybody's real estate office that was arranged like that kind of office. With all those windows and tellers, it was just like a bank! His office was in the back, up in the mezzanine, as I recall, and I had never been in an office that was as elaborately furnished as that guy's office was furnished. I can't recall the realtor's name.

He dealt primarily in downtown business properties. As I recall, the only residential property that firm handled was probably in Piedmont--big sales. He didn't know anything about West Oakland and couldn't care less. So now then he sublets the contract to a smaller realtor to make the appraisals and from investigations, we found that that man didn't go into a single house. We charged that he made those appraisals while sitting in his automobile in front of the houses and it never was denied.

Now Washington operated on the theory that local people would have brains enough to get all the money they could out of Washington and then bring it into their city. So they just started off by reducing whatever appraisals the local municipalities sent in to Washington. They'd reduce them by 40% because they figured because it's outside money, the city would over-evaluate everthing in order to get this money. Well, these fools in Oakland did just the opposite! This guy sat out there and looked at these houses with all of their racist ideas about West Oakland and whatnot and the appraisals were ridiculous. Now then they go to Washington and they get cut down 40%. So it had everybody up in arms. More than one guy threatened to get his shotgun and sit on his front porch, and kill anybody who attempted to come there to evict him or anything. He wasn't going to sell his house for those ridiculous prices they were offering.

This thing got so serious that this realtor who made the appraisals came looking for us because the Housing Authority needed help. They were in plenty of trouble. That's why I was in this big guy's office that had the contract to make the appraisals. We were trying to find some way to straighten out

Dellums: this thing. Well, we succeeded in finally getting Washington to reexamine our appraisals and to up the price somewhat, so that it was no longer a steal. But nobody got a fair price for their home, nobody got enough. The first price would have been a steal if it was a private operation, but because the government was doing it, it was more like confiscation. So we got some more money and we finally settled it so that only a few people went to court.

Most of the people eventually negotiated a sale for their property. But some held out till the end when they went to court and then the courts had appraisals made. In most cases they didn't get enough additional price for it from our conservative judges to pay the lawyers for handling it. But that's how we got low rent public housing started in Oakland.

Then we moved to our second phase of the fight which was deciding the policy for selecting tenants. We were demanding of the Oakland Housing Authority that they announce a public policy of integration. They would never do it. We argued and we fussed and we met with them and we raised sand, but they would never do it! I got some information leaked to me which wasn't supposed to be leaked and I think it was sent oftentimes, "Tell Dellums that he'll be satisfied. Take it easy, give us a break, he'll be satisfied." But I was not satisfied.

However, when they got ready to open Campbell Village, they hired a Negro to manage it. He was a very good friend of mine by the name of William P. Butler, a Negro realtor, and some years earlier the only Negro realtor in Oakland who would hustle to get a house for Negroes where white people didn't want them--in so-called white districts. They knew that all of us would be satisfied with Butler as the manager. Then Butler went out to select the tenants and checkerboard it. It became a showplace of the nation for public housing projects. He checkerboarded every floor, every unit, and it lasted for years that way and the people got along just beautifully. Visiting dignitaries would come here and Washington sent people out to look it

Dellums: over and find out if the reports were really true.

It was an example of how people can live together if you just give them half a chance to live together. There was only one washroom per unit, and while the first lady that got in there was using the washroom, some lady would go and find out who's next and if she said, "Well, nobody's come yet." She said, "Ok, I'll be next. I'm Mrs. So-and-so." She'd list her name so that she was next. Then if the next lady came along before this first lady finished--"Who's next?"

"Well, Mrs. So-and-so's going to be next and I'll notify her when I'm finished."

"Well, then I'll have her notify me." And they just went right down the line. Nobody tried to chisel in out of their turn or anything! This project holds the reputation that for the first person that moved out, owning some rent, the tenants got together in their local council and chipped in and paid that money to protect the good name of Campbell Village. So the city did not lose a month's rent from the first tenant that moved out.

That, briefly, is the story of low rent public housing in Oakland.

JH: I see. But before it could be built, homes had to be torn down?

Dellums: Oh, yes. They weren't necessarily dilapidated. There are houses here now that are in much worse condition than those were then, but you know how they do these things; they just don't do them as most of us think they ought to. Now there were houses over here on the south side of 7th Street in worse condition. There were houses west of Campbell Village in worse condition. It was our thinking that they should have started at Cedar Street and then worked east. Some of those houses are still over there; the same houses that were there then in the '30's. There is one on Wood Street that I used to live in almost fifty years ago. It's still there. I don't think that it had had a bucket of paint in fifty years when I lived

Dellums: in it and it hasn't had a bucket of paint since I moved away nearly fifty years ago! So those are the places that should have been destroyed and are still waiting to be destroyed. The houses they took to build Campbell Village wouldn't be looked upon as nice houses today because standards have changed. But for that day and time, they were not the worst houses in West Oakland by a long shot.

It was one of the reasons that the purchase of them created such a furor. Those people who were living in their homes--and there were quite a number--couldn't understand why they wanted to take their home for that price while all the places over there on Pine Street and Wood Street and Cedar Street were in much worse condition than theirs. The people had kept their homes up like I imagine you would keep yours up. They were always presentable. But that was the Housing Authority's decision on it and so there was nothing that could be done about it. We went along with it to get houses built, although we couldn't get them built where we thought they should have been built.

Let me add one thing. I tried to teach Negroes a lesson from the low income housing in Oakland but it is not just the Negroes--the plain people run hot and cold. Now we fought like the devil to get the first project built, then we sat on our hands--as a group. The fight was over; we had won. That was the beginning! What did the establishment do? A few years later they built a second project called Peralta Village.

Then what did we get when they opened Peralta Village? We are down to two or three of us fighting now. Everybody's gone fishing. Everything is over. So when they opened that one, they had integrated segregation.

Do you know what we mean by integrated segregation? One building would be all-Negro, the next building would be all-white, the next building all-Negro. But there was no integration in the buildings, no checkerboarding in various buildings. That is what we called integrated segregation. Now. We still didn't learn, even though a few of us kept

Dellums: agitating, trying to show them what these people will do down at City Hall. But we didn't learn. So then they built the third one, Lockwood which was all-white when they first opened it. You see how they went? From integration to integrated segregation to lily-whitism.

JH: You think blacks let it happen?

Dellums: I know they let it happen! The same fight and the same hell-raising that prevented Campbell Village from being segregated would have prevented all of them from being segregated. We have a more glaring example of that; look at the years it took us to get FEPC on the books. After we got it, we went home thinking everything was all set. But FEPC has never been properly funded. FEPC opened up with about a 25% funding and today FEPC is still not more than 33% funded--even today. But how much hell are we raising about it? None. We'd rather seek some other method to do something and say, "Oh, they're [FEPC commission] too slow, they don't do anything."

We've never gone back to insist upon the thing being properly funded so there could be enough troops to carry on the battle. No FEPC consultant has any business with 75 to 100 cases! How in the world can you investigate a hundred cases at one time? Why we have consultants in this state today with over a hundred cases. Consultants should never have more than fifteen cases at any one time. A lot of people think that you can accept the complaint in the morning and settle it the next day. They are not nearly that easy.

JH: I imagine Peralta Village didn't have a black manager.

Dellums: Originally, my memory tells me that the first manager was white. As time went on they finally got him out of there. Life wasn't easy for him and eventually it was put under Butler's management. But it was too late by then. There was little Butler could do about it but ride herd on people. He was rather proud of the calibre of people who were picked to live there. I have taken committees there to go in and inspect it without any notice, so nobody was warned

Dellums: or anything. We'd just go off and find Butler and say, "Here I have a few friends in that want to look over these houses and if somebody will let us in, they'd like to see inside."

And every apartment we ever went in in Peralta Village, after Butler was manager, we found being kept up the same as we found them over here in Campbell, in the original apartments. The Negroes seemed to take pride in keeping their apartments as nice as the white people, and the white people weren't going to let those Negroes beat them doing anything. So here you've got that little friendly competition in there, which everybody profited by.

JH: Lockwood was in East Oakland.

Dellums: Yes.

JH: Well, wasn't East Oakland predominantly white anyway?

Dellums: Yes, but there was no law against Negroes living out there. They're living out there now! Negroes lived beyond Lockwood in East Oakland. There were Negroes then all the way out close to 90th Avenue, because I had some members of my organization that had bought homes on 83rd and 85th Avenues. Now there weren't very many. There were a few out there, but all were south of 14th Street. It would have taken an act of Congress to get east of 14th then, but one of the members of my union, John Mabson, was among the first Negroes that got east of 14th Street. There was no law against Negroes moving out there. When people need housing, they'll go wherever it is. Then, Negroes weren't wedded to West Oakland. Half the Negroes in Berkeley, in those days, had just moved out of West Oakland. As soon as they got on their feet and got jobs, they moved out.

JH: I was trying to figure out why Lockwood was segregated.

Dellums: Oh, no. I don't put much stock in coincidences. These things are pretty well planned. You see, the history of the first housing units shows that the people wouldn't have stood for anything else

Dellums: but integration. We got the people worked up and they were following us. If the people had stayed with us, I don't think we'd have had near the trouble in getting money for their homes. I think we would have gotten more, but a little newspaper showed up and they started following it. I think this paper was a weekly and I think it was discontinued after the housing fight was over. The leader of this newspaper became a city councilman for a long time. He was a retired locomotive engineer or fireman, I am not sure which, and I can't recall his name right now. If I could, I'd certainly call it, because he went in the city council on the strength of him leading this fight against low rent housing. He didn't win the fight against low rent housing, but he had this newspaper and you can use your own imagination about how and where something like that could have come from, but you're not old enough. Anyway, the oldtimers would have stood on a stack of bibles that they were certain as to where support for the paper was coming from.

JH: Where the money for the newspaper came from?

Dellums: Yes, the money for the paper.

JH: I'm trying to use my imagination. [Laughs]

Dellums: The power structure of Oakland. But I had no evidence that it was true or not. But the man who was printing that newspaper didn't have a quarter. So somebody else was furnishing the money. He led many people away--white and Negro. He was trying to kill low rent housing. They didn't understand that under eminent domain you cannot win! Don't concentrate on preventing badly needed low rent public housing in Oakland. Let's concentrate on getting an adequate price for your home. The people were with us at first until this white man took them away with this paper and everything.

Then when the people came back to us, it was too late! The original Housing Authority, through their connections, came to us for help. But if the people had stayed with us, I feel confident we would have been able to have gotten more money for their property and they wouldn't have suffered so.

V THE NATIONAL YOUTH ADMINISTRATION

JH: Speaking of fighting, the National Youth Administration had some problems.

Dellums: Yes.

JH: That was another New Deal set-up, wasn't it?

Dellums: Yes, the National Youth Administration was one of the New Deal agencies they set up under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to take care of young people and to get them off the streets--teen-agers largely. We had camps and whatnot to put them in to get them off the streets and teach them a trade. We began to open residence centers in or near the cities where they could be taught more. For instance, the government took over Asilomar. Have you ever been to Asilomar?

JH: No, but I know about it.

Dellums: The government took over Asilomar. We opened a residence center there. We had these kids from all over Northern California and took them down to Asilomar where there were ample facilities for them to sleep and a huge dining room for them to eat in. Then they set up some workshops and whatnot around there so that they would have something to do, and they tried to teach them something to make a living by. Now when this law was passed it was a different world than what we live in today. There was no question that Negroes in the South wouldn't have gotten one hundred dollars out of it if it had lasted one hundred years without some federal protection. So a so-called Negro section of which

Dellums: Mrs. [Mary] Bethune was over was put in there with the full knowledge of everybody who organized it that it was not a Northern proposition. It was to protect the Negroes in the South against the powers that be in the South. The South was run by the Bilbos--they were before your day--but they were even worse than the Wallaces and the Thurmonds and that group today.

JH: Yes, I've heard of the Bilbos. What was the set-up to protect the Southerners?

Dellums: Part of the law or maybe "rules and regulations" that provided for this Negro section so that Negroes could have something in the South.

JH: Was it called Negro Affairs?

Dellums: Yes, I think that was what it was called.

JH: Mrs. Bethune was the director of it?

Dellums: Yes. So she, on one of her trips out here, was sold the idea of setting up a Negro section in California. And it was set up! Well we didn't know anything about it till they announced in the newspapers that this Negro section was going to be set up and who the director was going to be. Vivian Osborne Marsh was going to be at the head of it out here.

I hit the ceiling and so did Gus Hawkins. So we raised quite a fuss about it. We tried to rally the Negroes of the state. We rallied them for a while. But we were rebuffed and of course the people ran hot and cold again. After a while everybody seemed to forget and to think the fight was over. We lost! But Gus and myself did not forget it and the two of us stayed on it. Most of the time it was just the two of us in touch with one another and we kept resorting to discussing strategy and whatnot on it, and writing our congressmen and senators on it.

One day I happened to be in a prominent downtown attorney's office. While sitting there talking with me, he got a long distance call from Senator

Dellums: Sheridan Downey. He was a close friend of his and he was a substantial contributor to Downey's campaigns. While they were talking, finally he said to Downey, "Sheridan, you never will guess who is sitting here in the office with me now with a good visit." Downey asked, "Who?" And he said, "Lawrence Dellums." So the senator said, "Well, let me say hello."

I took the phone and jumped Senator Downey right then. When you write legislators, their office handles the communications; they may never know that you wrote them. So I jumped Sheridan Downey about the NYA problem and I told him in some of my waterfront language that something had to be done about it!

So he said, "Well, now wait a minute, C.L., I'll send Mike Smith out there to see you and Gus and to report back to me on the facts of the thing and what you guys think ought to be done," and he said, "Something will be done about it." So I asked him, "When? Don't tell me you're going to send him and don't send him."

He said, "Now you know me better than that. I'll send him." And sure enough he did. I don't know how long it took--it didn't take too long. I got a letter from Mike, his administrative assistant, telling me when he'd be here and telling me where he'd be stopping--which hotel and everything--and he was looking forward to seeing me. So I went over and had a talk with Mike about it. I explained the situation to him and why a Negro provision was in the federal law and that there was no intention of having any segregated units in the North at all, and we sure as hell didn't want any in California. So then we went to Los Angeles to meet Gus and talk with him about it. Mike told both of us: "When I get back to Washington, I am going to tell the Senator that it was a mistake, with all due respects to this wonderful Mrs. Bethune."

So I said, "Yes, you don't think near as much of her as I think, but she still bought a gold brick!"

JH: Who sold her a gold brick?

Dellums: Since Mrs. Marsh got the number one job and she knew Mrs. Bethune so well, it was believed she was the one. I just couldn't see Mrs. Bethune setting it up without being convinced that a Negro division was needed. So Mike went back and reported it to Senator Downey and Senator Downey then had a conference with Mrs. Bethune about it. Then Mrs. Bethune sent her assistant out here to talk with us about it. Her assistant was Dr. O'Hara Lenier. He later became the first president of the university they built in Houston, Texas Southern University. They built that college there to try to prevent Negroes from going to the University of Texas.

It was a Negro school then. We were disappointed that Dr. Lenier accepted the appointment as president, because we were so opposed to it. But he was an extremely able man. So Dr. Lenier came out and he spent a few days here with me and then we went to Los Angeles and met with Gus. I made Dr. Lenier's reservations for him. He stayed in the old Clark Hotel and I drove from Oakland and stayed in the Clark Hotel where we conferred. Dr. Lenier wrote his report to Mrs. Bethune there in the Clark Hotel, partly in my room and partly in his, and he didn't send it until Gus and I approved it. When we approved his report and recommendations, he typed them up there in my hotel room, sealed it, and handed me the envelopes. I posted them to Mrs. Bethune. Lenier came through here years after that and he was headed overseas someplace. I don't recall where now. But we had him out for dinner and found that he loved--what was it? Irish whiskey? I've forgotten what it was now, but I happened to have some [laughing] and I gave him a little bottle to take with him. It made him very proud.

But that's how the Negro section in the NYA was abolished. Then the heavens came down on me. The two Negroes, Mrs. Marsh and Florence Crawford, that were working in the Negro NYA lost their jobs, so they gave me hell. Mrs. Marsh was given the title of the head of it and Florence Crawford was her secretary.

Dellums: Florence wasn't as bitter against me as Vivian was, but Florence circulated a petition with her, condemning Gus and myself, but primarily me. The petition didn't hurt Gus or myself at all. After all, I am a Mason too. Both of the women were Eastern Stars. They made a mistake in trying to harm me in Masonic ranks.

JH: Were the segregated centers actually set up?

Dellums: Yes. I don't know how long it lasted, but it seems it took pretty close to two years to abolish it. So I don't remember just what they did get done, but obviously, being only two people, they didn't get very much done. They had an office in San Francisco.

All right. Now. As a result of this fight that Gus and I carried on, with the support of Senator Downey, and after Mrs. Bethune realized that it was a mistake based on what Dr. Lenier had reported, she went along; she didn't oppose abolishing it.

Then the head of the NYA ordered a reorganization of the California set-up. They set up a State Advisory Committee. They asked me to serve on the committee and I was appointed to serve. I think Gus went on the committee also. I remember Gus being in one meeting with us at Asilomar, I believe. That's where I met Helen Gahagan. She was on the committee. She was really something. That beautiful girl did a job on there. She led the fight with us to get rid of segregation and discrimination. The state director employed a Negro, I think on Gus Hawkins' recommendation, as his assistant. The state director was named Bob Burns. We hired a young Negro as his assistant named Brown. If Gus and I wanted something looked into, we'd tell Brown, and he would go check it so we would have the authentic information, reports and whatever documentation was necessary the next time the state board met.

But anyway, Helen didn't need all of that. We outlined what we thought was wrong and ought to be done. She'd turn to the state director and say,

Dellums: "Bob, do you deny that that's true?"

"No."

"Well by God, if that's what is happening, why the hell don't we do something about it? Now let's break it up." And she'd make the motion quickly and order what to do on it. [Laughs]

Jn: Did you like her kind of liberalism?

Dellums: Oh God, yes. She's my kind of person. She's outspoken and a couple of curse words didn't embarrass her. She'd use them herself.

JH: I've seen a picture of her in the newspaper. She doesn't look like the type who would use that kind of language.

Dellums: [Laughs] Oh, she was a wonderful person. She wasn't vulgar like I am. She'd use accepted language for a lady for the day and time, but a little bit more curse words than the normal woman would use. She was so outspoken, you know. It makes a lot of difference for a white person on the committee to lead the fight to do something about discrimination than for me to lead it or Gus to lead it. Especially someone with as much stature and prestige as Helen. You know who she was, of course. She was a great opera singer and a great actress in her own name. A lot of people knew her as Helen Gahagan who didn't know she was Melvyn Douglas's wife for years. Melvyn then was a matinee idol. My wife still thinks he is. She knows he's not beautiful now but every time she sees him on the TV, the way he looks today, she shakes her head. "Such a beautiful man, and he has to look like this!" [Laughs] I get a kick out of that.

I say, "Yes, you should have seen his wife!" That's how I get back at her. [Laughing] Helen was pretty! And she was a wonderful person.

That's the reason that they finally talked her into taking an active part in politics. She ran for Congress--and went to Congress, which is a whole different story.

JH: She went to Washington?

Dellums: Yes, as congresswoman. But not from the district where she lived. She lived up in Hollywood or Beverly Hills, I don't know which. But she lived up in the hills, one of those places you needed a map to find, with a beautiful swimming pool. She lived where the people of her wealth and prominence were able to live and should live. I was up there once or twice when Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt was out here. There was some meeting with her at Helen's home. Melvyn was in the army. I never met him; he was in the army at the time.

Helen filed and ran for Congress from the predominantly Negro Central Avenue district. She didn't live within ten or fifteen miles of that district. But I don't know how well-known it is now. It was a shocker to two million people who didn't know what went on then, that you don't have to live in the Congressional district that you run from. You can run from any district in the state! You could run for Congress from a Los Angeles district, if you wanted to, just as long as it is in the state. So she ran from the district down there and she knew the Negroes would support her. She was popular with the brothers. So she won. She stayed until she sought a higher office, left of her own volition. She ran for the Senate. A vicious, unbelievable campaign was carried on to defeat her for the Senate. Incidentally, the man who beat her after carrying on that vicious campaign against that fine human being is now president of the United States.

VI THE EAST BAY DRAFT BOARD

Dellums: I served I think about two years on the East Bay Draft Board. I think it was the first board that was set up. I served of course because Roosevelt was president. I was supposed to have had some connections and influence--well, I was the guy around here then.

I was the radical. They called me lots worse and whatnot, you know. But our board that I served on was the only board in the county that employed Negroes. At one time we had eight employees in our office. Four were white and four were Negro. No other board in the county employed any. Now there was constant agitation against me on the board. There were more crackpot letters coming in! The FBI had a file on me--oh gosh, I don't know how thick--according to some of the FBI boys who were conducting some of the investigations of these charges against me. I was charged with sending a disproportionate number of boys of Italian descent to the army and keeping my Negro friends' kids out. Well, of course it wasn't true. I wasn't even the chairman on the board. They would come back, "Well, he's [Dellums] the strong man on there, he dominates it, he runs it." But there wasn't a word of truth in it.

We worked a system on our board. When the man came from Washington to investigate our board he told us that we had the best system in the nation and it was the only draft board he had found yet who took a questionnaire that the registrant had signed. The way the girls in our office fixed it, when we looked at the questionnaire to classify him, we couldn't see his name or address. So you

Dellums: see we classified registrants strictly on the information that was on that questionnaire he filled in and signed. We didn't know who it was.

But we never found that the youngsters of Italian descent had any objections to going to the army. They would fight Mussolini! There were too many parents in West Oakland then who came from Italy. They didn't want their sons fighting against Italy. I think the parents were the ones who were writing these crank letters because they were always coming down to the board to try to get deferments for their children.

We played no favorites. There was no favoritism on our board. I believe our board was No. 73. If you could justify deferment for your son, you got it. If you couldn't, you didn't. But the mere fact that he was of Italian descent and Mussolini in Italy was an enemy wasn't going to change us. The boys would never come to ask for deferments. It was their parents coming. We'd have boys come within a few hours after their parents had left and tell us, "I knew Momma was coming down here, but that's not me. I hope you didn't defer me!" We'd say, "Don't worry, we didn't." [Laughs] But we never found any evidence that those youngsters themselves had any objections to going. It was the parents; and almost all of them, if they weren't immigrants themselves, were first generation. Their parents were still over there. So we had trouble; we had problems. Earl Warren had just become governor.

In an attempt to take away my alleged power, two members were added to the board. It was a board of three, originally. This was done on account of all these charges, "This Negro is dominating the board and the Negro gal is running it."

JH: Who was that?

Dellums: Thelma Johnson, she was then. The daughter of the wonderful H.T.S. Johnson, the minister, whom I mentioned before. She was not the number one girl, but the girl that had that title could not do the work. I chose Thelma. Now one of the members of

Dellums: the board who worked with me in politics--and I've forgotten his name--recommended the top girl. We hired her on his recommendation because I was supporting him for anybody he wanted. He'd helped us and worked with us, everything we wanted. He was a fine old man--retired and elderly. He was not as old as I am now, [laughs] but he was elderly.

We discovered that the head girl couldn't do the work. But she needed the job. Her mother was confined to the house (it seems to me her mother was an invalid). There was just the two of them. It would have just been heartless to kick her out, but my friend on the board (I've forgotten the story) had been helping this girl and her mother. She was white. Thelma had to do the work.

We, the members of the board, leaned on Miss Johnson and not on this lady. I don't even recall her name. So when a federal man came out and investigated us to see what was going on, he called us together and he told us something has got to be done about it. "You've got to ask for that lady's resignation. I'm not going to allow this woman to stay and carry the title and draw the money and Miss Johnson is doing the work. Miss Johnson is the best qualified girl we've run into anywhere." He'd brought his daughter with him--she was supposed to be an expert in Selective Service. He said, "She knows more about Selective Service than my daughter and I thought she was the best." So he said, "You guys ought to put that girl out of here and put Miss Johnson in charge."

Well, we had to ask for her resignation. The man was demanding it. Now then we split wide open on her successor. They wouldn't support me for Miss Johnson.

JH: Please go on with the draft board story.

Dellums: They voted three to two against Thelma and then hired an old man who knew from nothing. He stayed just a few weeks and resigned. I was in the East when they fired Thelma. The charge was she allowed the man to fail. We had to fight her dismissal through governmental channels. That took years, in those days, and was almost hopeless. They decided

Dellums: that I had to go, apparently. So, to get rid of me, they removed all of us for reorganization. Warren had been elected governor then. I don't think he had a hand in this. It was coming before he took office.

JH: What was Governor Earl Warren's role in this controversy?

Dellums: One of the members of the board was a Republican businessman. I don't remember his name. He was one of the two new members and voted with me most of the time. Charlie Real, a union leader, was the other one. They said they were going to Sacramento to the governor because he would see that they were appointed to the new board. I kidded them about four of "them" being sacrificed just to get me. Not good enough odds, four for one, but not too bad. Incidentally, Real, the labor man, almost never voted with me. And they were not reappointed to the board.

[Interview 3 - February 26, 1971]

VII THE NAACP

JH: When did you become active in the NAACP?

Dellums: Well, I became active in the NAACP as soon as I learned what it was all about. I don't recall knowing very much about the NAACP until I moved to Oakland. I had never seen any of its publications because I grew up in a small town in Texas. But when I came to Oakland, the Pullman Company employed a Negro they called a Pullman porter instructor. He trained the Negroes they employed and they generally employed a few annually. There was some turnover among porters. The instructor was Lee Williams and I'm sure that half the members of the NAACP-- it was called "Northern California Branch NAACP" then--were solicited by Lee Williams, and they were railroad men. It cost a dollar a year to join but it was hard to get a Negro to join the NAACP, just about as hard as getting one to join the Brotherhood. I don't know why. Lee Williams told me about the NAACP and I joined. And I became active in it. Then after I got fired by the Pullman Company and began to devote full time to the Brotherhood, why then I was in town all the time and became available. I began to get more and more active in the NAACP, participating in it, and that grew until I held the various offices in it.

JH: About what year did you become vice-president under Walter Gordon?

Dellums: I don't know when now; I don't know what year it was.

JH: Early forties, would you say?

Dellums: I think it was in the 1930's. I think Walt served about ten years or something like that himself and I was first vice-president and chairman of what we called "The Legal Redress Committee" in those days. Then after Earl Warren became governor, he appointed Walter to what I think was called the Prison and Parole Board. I think it is the Adult Authority now. Walter obviously couldn't continue to head the NAACP. It might be looked upon as a conflict of interests. Also he didn't have the time, because that was a full time position that Earl Warren had appointed him to. I took over and finished his term. Then I was elected at the next election and I remained president without opposition until I voluntarily stepped down. Franklin Williams asked me to, so as to devote more time helping to build and to run the region.

I think it was probably during Walt's administration that several other branches of the association, having been organized, objected to us being called the Northern California Branch, as if we were the only one. So our branch was named the Alameda County branch and we maintained that name until finally Mrs. Tarea Pittman led the drive to break it up into three branches, hoping that it would increase the membership and localize the activities. Then we changed the name to the Oakland Branch and organized ones in Berkeley and Alameda. This was done in several big cities, breaking down into multiple branches. The fact that I never had any opposition the years I was the head of it speaks for itself. The most successful membership campaigns were started under my administration and with Ty[rea Pittman]'s* assistance. Ty Pittman headed the Membership Committee for me every year.

I worked on the philosophy of not sending the committee out to do something, but telling them to come on, let's do it! I would challenge the members of the Membership Committee to bring in as many memberships as I did and to bring in as much money as I did. I knew they wouldn't bring in as much money as I did but they could bring in as many memberships. I think for--oh gosh, I don't know--nine or ten straight years I brought in a minimum of a hundred memberships myself and would raise more

*An interview is in process with Mrs. Tarea Pittman.

Dellums: money because of course in my position I could put the bee on people and get a bigger membership. I wouldn't take dollar memberships from people I knew pretty well. Even when it went to two dollars, I wouldn't take the two dollar membership from a lawyer or a doctor or even a number one minister, a minister from the large churches. I wouldn't take anything like that from them. A five dollar membership was the minimum. From many of them I wouldn't even accept five dollar memberships. I maintained a five dollar membership myself and when I was able to take out a ten dollar membership I did. So I'd show those birds my card and say, "You're better off than I am." Then I'd work people up; I'd call them up on the telephone and say, "Send fifty dollars. You're able to take out a fifty dollar membership." If I had to use a little rough language to them I'd do it. If they didn't mail it, I'd go get it!

JH: Because of your labor connections and so forth, you probably could call up just about anybody and ask them. Are you speaking about that kind of position?

Dellums: No, my position in the Brotherhood and the race. You see, Negroes appreciated what the Brotherhood had done. The Brotherhood was looked upon as the Number One organization, outside of the NAACP. All of us of the Brotherhood always maintained, "Don't put us Number One! The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is the Number One organization of the race, because all of us are a part of the National Association. The National Association is the greatest and the biggest civil rights organization in the world. The National Association is the one organization whose only dedication is complete, total equality. No strings attached to it and that means social and whatever you want to call it. Randolph was a vice-president for many a year. So we would never let anybody attempt to put us equal with the NAACP. Oh no. We'd say, "Oh, make us Number Two if you've just got to label us, but don't put anything up there with the NAACP."

JH: My idea of the NAACP is one of a non-militant type of organization. Did you find it to be so in those early days?

Dellums: Well in my early days in the association I, too, felt it was not militant enough. But my investigation of the association had convinced me already that the association was a militant protest organization per se. But local branches were no more militant than the local leadership was and, I imagine, the support of the local community.

I didn't think that the Northern California Branch (which was the name of it back in the late '20's and early '30's) was militant enough. I had been told by older members that it had traditionally been led by ministers. I joined in with another handful of brothers to change that type of leadership and make sure we got a more militant leadership. In due time I think that we succeeded in that. However as years went on the association became better known and more militant. There were a few militant ministers-- and when I say militant ministers I limit it, because I don't think you can even expect a minister to go as far as someone else would go. But we had some militant ministers in there, like H.T.S. Johnson who was the first and most militant president we had in the ministry here during my day.

H.T.S. Johnson

Dellums: I had heard of H.T.S. Johnson in the very early '20's--I think '20 or '21--when I went to Tulsa, Oklahoma. My brother, William, lived in Tulsa at the time of the riot, and we couldn't get any information as to whether or not he survived the riot, and I finally went to Tulsa myself to try to locate him. I had some other relatives there, too. However, I had to stay in Muskogee several days because they weren't allowing Negroes to come into Tulsa at first. I spent, as I recall, about two weeks in Muskogee. Fortunately I had some relatives there. But as soon as I could get into Tulsa I went, and none of my relatives were killed or injured. My brother had been arrested and put under the top

Dellums: bail of \$10,000, which was a tremendous bail in those days. The so-called Negro "leaders" of the riot, the ones that the police designated as leaders, were put under \$10,000 bail because they fought back and urged other Negroes to fight. So I was proud of William because he at least was rated as one of the leaders of the riot and put under top bail. While I was in Tulsa I was trying to find out what went on. I found out about the way the Negroes were treated and how they were herded up like cattle and put under guard. A day or two after the riot, they could only leave when some white man came to vouch for them or to get them because he needed them to work. They put some kind of a tag on the Negroes so that the cops wouldn't bother them. He could go about his business because he had been vouched for.

A prominent white minister went to this place where they had the Rev. Johnson and wanted to vouch for him so that they would let him out. They offered to let him out but he refused to leave. He said that he didn't need any one to vouch for him, that he would not leave as long as some white man had to vouch for him, that he would not leave the tag on him, and that he still considered himself a free American and slavery had been abolished! That's the kind of man and minister he was. He did not leave that "compound," wherever they had those Negroes, until he could leave as a free man.

Later he moved to the East Bay, as pastor of Parks Chapel Church. As a matter of fact, his widow is still living and she just had her ninety-first birthday recently, and there are some other relatives still around. Some of his daughters are still living and are still in the Bay District.

We elected Rev. Johnson president of the association. I don't recall how long he served, but he was with us, and we became very good friends. He supported me as I supported him during his administration.

JH: Was he president just before Gordon was elected?

Dellums: My memory tells me that he was the president prior to Walter Gordon, and Walter Gordon succeeded Rev. Johnson.

JH: What do you want to say about Walter Gordon?

Walter A. Gordon

Dellums: Walter Gordon was a very valuable man. He was very personable. I liked Walter from the first time I met him and as time went on we became very good friends. I considered him a friend; I certainly was a friend of his and I think he considered me a friend. We worked together very well, very closely. I appreciated Walter even though there were some things about Walter I don't think he understood himself. You've got to know something about Walter's background.

Walter grew up in San Bernardino. There are very few Negroes in San Bernardino. Walter's still got a lot of school pictures taken at various times. I don't recall seeing any Negroes in any of Walter's class pictures that he showed me, even in San Bernardino. Now I may have missed a few here and there because I'm just talking off the top of my head from remembering a long time ago. There couldn't have been very many. So Walter had a background of being an only Negro thereabouts. When Walter went to Cal I am sure there weren't a half a dozen Negroes at Cal; I feel positive of that. Walter made the football team, which was an achievement in itself in those days.

Walter was on one of the "Wonder Teams" coached by Andy Smith. He was one of the first players west of the Rockies that received honorable mention in the All-American. Now in those days there was only one All-American group selected from football players every year. That was done by Walter Camp. The newspapers didn't select them--nobody else. Walter Camp's word was the Bible. He chose them. For many years he picked them from the Ivy League. He finally found out the United States extended a little

Dellums: farther west, all the way to the big ten. The Pacific Coast had been left out, of course. But finally as a result of Andy Smith's Wonder Team, Walter Camp had to come west. I don't remember the white player, I think he was Brick Muller. He might have been picked as an All American, I'm not sure but I think Walt got honorable mention.

Andy Smith employed Walter as one of the assistant coaches when he graduated from Cal. For I don't know how many years, maybe twenty, but for a long time Walter was an assistant coach at the University of California. Now Walter was the first and only Negro employed on a coach's staff of a white college. Walter was in charge of the line for many years. He coached what they called then "the scrubs," I believe they called them, "goofs" or something like that.

Walter became the nation's number one scout, recognized as the greatest scout in the nation. Walter would scout the team they were going to play next, then he would come back and coach the secondary, we might call it, how to carry out this other team's plays so that then they could play against the varsity. The varsity then could prepare for the next game with some knowledge of their plays. Oddly enough, with coaching and scouting at Cal, Walter was still associating primarily with whites.

Then he went on the Berkeley Police Force, the first and only Negro there. He stayed on there for, I don't know, ten or twelve years. He was allowed to take time off every year to continue his coaching and scouting for Cal. Then finally he decided to resign from the police department and to practice law. He had already graduated but had never practiced. He opened a law office on the corner of University and San Pablo in Berkeley, but he still carried on his work for Cal. Then he wanted to get active in the Negro community. But when we first met and talked with Walter, Walter's ideas were nothing like ours at all.

I recall several of us used to have little meetings once in a while and talk about Walter. Oh, I remember one day several of them came up here after

Dellums: I'd opened up this office. John Pittman, I think, was one of them, and Kelly Williams and I don't remember who else now. But our definition of Walter then was that Walter was a black-white man walking the streets, and didn't know it. In fact, some of them wanted to just forget him. Walt was never told how Negroes felt towards him at that time. I said, "Oh, no. Walter is one of the most valuable Negroes in the nation and we need him." They couldn't understand why, and I said, "Because of his connections. All those years of his connections, not just in California, through his work with that football team." I said, "People who'll be running California came up with Walter at that university and they are proud to know him!" I've been downtown with him. I've been in the courthouse with him to see how those judges and whatnot, no matter who they're with, if they look up and see him, they say, "Hi Walt!" and wave at him. I had never seen anything like that before. A judge, a superior court judge, going out of his way to shake hands, and just say "Hi!" So I said, "Let me tell you fellows something, if you ever want to see the governor, do you think we could ever see the governor of California? We'd be on the phone for weeks probably and we'd have to give our pedigrees to get to see the governor of California. But I'll make you a wager that Walter Gordon can pick up the telephone and call the governor's office and say 'I'm Walter Gordon, I want to speak with the governor,' and they'd put him through. They know just who he is. So we can't draw a red ring around a Negro like that. Now maybe we'll have to make a Negro out of him but let's keep working on it."

What was the major thing wrong with Walter? The major thing that was wrong with Walter was Walter believed what white people told him. Walt could not visualize a man who is a governor or a mayor of a city lying to him. He couldn't visualize that at all. He didn't have our background. I wouldn't believe anything they say until they proved it. I didn't have more confidence in a guy's word because he was a governor of the state or the mayor of the city than I did anybody else. He's got to come through before I'm really satisfied with him,

Dellums: that he will do it! Walt would accept his word.

JH: Hadn't Walt's attitude gotten him pretty far in life?

Dellums: Well, I think probably the definition that the guys came up with of him being a white-black man wasn't too far wrong. But it took a few to get him. I remember Walt was with us in a delegation that went to the City Hall and I believe it was the city manager, Jack Hasler, who made a definite commitment to us. I can't recall just what it was. I remember Ishmael Flory was there. The city manager didn't keep his word and Ish blamed Walt, but I was able to keep down a community row. William Pickens, field secretary of NAACP, New York, was out here and went with us. There must have been somewhere between nine and a dozen of us in there and we got a definite commitment out of the city manager. But I think Walt was the only Negro in there that walked out completely satisfied that that was the end of it! The city manager said he'd do it, he'll do it. That's the end of it. When the city manager said he would call Walt, Ishmael, not having the confidence in Walt, objected. Ish wanted him to also call me, C.L. Walt spoke up and said he'd call C.L. as soon as Hasler called him.

Hasler didn't call Walt when he promised and when he did, he explained and Walt accepted it. When Walt called me, I told him he made a mistake and the fellows wouldn't like it. I always felt this taught Walt a lesson because he was tougher in dealing with them after that. Let me say here that I think the thing that drew me to Walter Gordon was the fact that I could see that Walt wasn't afraid of anyone, no matter his color or position. I hadn't met too many Negroes who registered with me that way. Anyway, when I called Ishmael and told him, "Well," he said, "I knew that So-and-So wouldn't keep his word! He then said Hasler snowed Walt. So I can't call the members of the committee and inform them of anything." Ish always felt that Hasler knew he could get away if he only had to deal with Walt.

A few things like that convinced Walt that you have to pin these people down. As I recall our

Dellums: next experience with Hasler was in connection with a license for the Elks Lodge to operate a cabaret. The day we were to see Hasler, we found when we got to the City Hall that Hasler was out at the baseball game and his secretary was there to see us. Walt hit the ceiling and told the secretary that we didn't have an appointment to see him and wouldn't talk with him. He told this man to tell Hasler when we would be back and we expected him, Hasler, to be there because we intended to get the license. Walt, Tom Jackson and myself were the committee representing the Lodge. When we went back Hasler still wasn't there but the license was there waiting for us.

JH: When you were vice-president, you served on the Legal Redress committee. What kind of complaint cases did you receive most?

Dellums: Most of the complaint cases we had in those days were discrimination in places of public accommodation, police brutality cases and thirdly, of course, were cases of discrimination in employment. However, I did not chair the committee that dealt with cases of employment. That committee was in those days known as the Labor and Industry Committee. We had somebody that was chairing the committee, but I usually worked with them and served on the committee because of my labor background. They found that my knowledge of the labor movement--particularly the local labor unions--was of great value to them. I had compiled a list of the unions that officially discriminated, that is, that had color clauses in their rituals and constitutions, and those that had Negro members and at least tried to be somewhat fair to Negroes. And that advice was always helpful to them. Generally they wanted me to go with them if they were going to see some employer or some union and I would go, if I possibly could.

Discrimination in Richmond Shipyard

JH: When the NAACP was helping Negroes get employment in the Oakland and Richmond shipyards during World War II, how were you active in that?

Dellums: Well, a lot of changes had come about by then. The nation, of course, had launched an all-out defense program. It was prior to Pearl Harbor. Many of us felt strongly that the nation was really getting ready for war and not defense. Shipyards were being built all around the Bay Area and expanding.

A. Philip Randolph organized and led a national movement in 1941 for a march on Washington to demand of the president that an executive order be issued to break up discrimination in the national defense industries and in the government itself, which was the Number One discriminator. As a result of that effort, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, after the date of the march had been set and just a few days before the march, issued the executive order that we wanted and the march was then postponed.

Now the president appointed a commission to administer his executive order. One of the vice-presidents of the Brotherhood, Milton P. Webster of Chicago, was appointed by Roosevelt to serve on this committee, and incidentally, he was the only member that served on the committee during its entire existence! Some months after the president's committee was in operation there wasn't an identifiable Negro working in any shipyard, and Kaiser alone had three or four in Richmond. I called Webster and suggested they get Clarence Johnson and send him here to crack these shipyards. Webster called the committee's office in Washington and they went to work on it.

Clarence Johnson was a Californian with a labor background, who came from the Dining Car Cooks and Waiters Union here on the Southern Pacific. Clarence had gone back to Washington working in the Public Housing Administration. Then some other department borrowed Clarence away from Housing. But they ran him

Dellums: down, and got this department to let Clarence come over and work for the president's committee, the FEPC, because we wanted him sent out to California to help us break down discrimination in the shipyards.

So Clarence and myself worked together pretty much. I was connected with the Brotherhood and Randolph and the whole FEPC setup. So we went to work on the shipyards and we stayed on them until we opened up the gates. I recall we would go from Kaiser's to the union and back to Kaiser. The shipyard was blaming everything on the union but Clarence and I knew better. One day we got some union officials who knew us to let us have the written proof that it was the shipyard. When we went back and finally had the shipyard guy where we wanted him, Clarence pulled two referral cards out and placed them in front of that fellow and at the same time reached for the phone to call Washington. The man said, "That won't be necessary." He then took the phone and called one of the yards and gave these two names to the man he was talking to and said, "When they show up, put them to work even though they are Negroes." This was just before Pearl Harbor.

Fate plays a funny trick on these white people sometimes, because two years after they removed the barriers and allowed Negroes to go to work in the shipyards, one of the Kaiser shipyards in Richmond launched a ship named for a Negro--the George Washington Carver. Walter Gordon, Rev. H.T.S. Johnson, and myself were the principle participants in the program there that day. I was master of ceremonies. Rev. Johnson opened the meeting with prayer and remarks he wanted to make, and then Walter Gordon made the principal speech. Miss Lena Horne was the guest of honor and she was going to swing the champagne bottle to launch the ship. Lena then was a beautiful young woman--she's a beautiful middle-aged woman now--but Lena was a very beautiful young woman and was under contract to M-G-M and was on location making a picture at the time, but they let her come up for the launching of the ship. Then we went to all four of the Kaiser shipyards and they had special platforms put up and allowed

Dellums: everybody to stop working for a few minutes to come and hear Miss Horne make a speech urging them to buy War Bonds. I think they heard what she said, but they came out to see this beautiful woman, rather than to hear what she had to say. It was all a very successful day.

I thought it was an odd trick, that we had spent three days out there at that shipyard alone trying to get Negroes in there and then in about two years here they are launching a ship named for a Negro. It was estimated there were about 10,000 Negroes working in the four shipyards by then.

JH: And this was in Richmond?

Dellums: In Richmond, yes.

Florence Crawford

JH: Can you tell me about Florence Crawford, the Negro woman, who worked in Attorney General Warren's office?

Dellums: Florence was active in the Eastern Star. And I, an active Shriner, and her husband, an active Mason and a Negro fireman, had been good friends for years. Florence had taken the civil service examination and the type of stenographer that was needed was very scarce. As she told me herself, they called her when she passed the examination and on the strength of her papers wanted to know if she could come to work right away. She finally agreed to go for an interview. The vacancy was in the attorney general's office in San Francisco.

Then when they saw that she was a Negro, they began making excuses. They said they had to interview a lot of other people and that they'd let her know. It was one of those "Don't call me, I'll call you," deals. They didn't call her. Finally her husband pleaded with her to "come see C.L. Dellums and try to get him to help you."

At first she was reluctant to do it. One reason was because Warren was Republican and I was a known

Dellums: Democrat. But finally she began to believe that she was not going to get the position. She finally came to see me and asked me if I would write Attorney General Warren a letter for her, and try to get him to put her on. So I kidded her about it, "I'm a Democrat, I don't think he'll even listen to me. We've always been on opposite sides of political issues."

But she said she had reason to believe that a letter from me would be helpful just the same. So I wrote the letter. About two days later she went to work. Now whether the letter had anything to do with it or not, who knows? But about two days after I wrote the attorney general about it, Florence went to work.

JH: Did Attorney General Warren know you personally before?

Dellums: We had met. I'd been in his office a couple of times. Whether he actually would have recognized me by sight I don't know, but I imagine that he would have. I had not only been in his office a couple of times but I was active in the community, participated in community affairs and had emceed a number of public meetings by then.

The times I was in his office were when he was district attorney of Alameda County. That's years before then! So it is hard for me to believe that the district attorney in those days would not have known a big-mouthed Negro like I was. I was called a radical and everything else under the sun in those days. The types of meetings that the Brotherhood had held at which A. Philip Randolph was the principal speaker gave me some publicity. The name, Dellums, was pretty well known then. So I imagine that by the time Warren became attorney general, he at least knew who I was.

JH: What did you think of his work as attorney general? Did he accomplish anything outstanding?

Dellums: While he was attorney general I can't think of anything offhand that he did that made him any more distinguishable than during his term as district attorney of Alameda County. The office of attorney

Dellums: general doesn't offer many opportunities. Oh, yes! He was attorney general in 1942 and recommended the Japanese evacuation. He had said it was wrong.

The Oakland Key System Company

JH: Let's talk about the Key System streetcars in Oakland, and how you and others got Negroes on as conductors. When exactly did the NAACP concentrate on the problem? Did it start as early as when you were first on the Legal Redress Committee?

Dellums: Oh, there was some mild agitation way back. We worked on the problem periodically. But one must remember that the association had no paid personnel and the leaders of the association were busy people trying to make a living. We devoted our time--all the time we could spare and some we shouldn't have spared--to the NAACP work, because we were the only agency we had fighting only for civil rights and we knew then, of course, that it was the outstanding civil rights agency in the nation and so we worked at it! But we couldn't concentrate too long a time on any one fight. There was just too much to do and not enough people to do it. But periodically we would start some agitation at the Key System, trying to get Negroes on.

And then during World War II, the white workers were jumping the streetcars because they could get higher pay working in shipyards and other so-called "war industries." The Key System was pleading for help. There was a scarcity of workers, and we thought that the time was propitious now to start the drive for Negro employment all over again--and we did! There was a young Negro who got in the act--I can't even recall that fellow's name any more; it was Jimmie something. But I think his work kind of pushed the rest of us in the background.

We rented an office downtown Oakland. As I recall, it was in the nine or ten hundred block on Broadway. He used this in the name of the association of course. He worked with us rounding

Dellums: up qualified Negroes to become motormen and conductors so that they could pass the Key's examination, because even when they got up to the point where the Key Route would allow Negroes to take the examination, no Negro could pass it. There was a time limit, according to them, on how much time you took to complete the examination. The claim was that they didn't force whites to comply with the time limit but did force Negroes. It would take a speed reader with a brilliant mind to do it within that limited time. Negroes claimed that officials held a stopwatch on them. When that time was up a Negro had to turn in his paper regardless of how many questions he'd answered. But they didn't hold the stopwatch on the white people taking the examination.

Well, this one NAACP fellow found out who published this questionnaire that Key System was using. I don't remember the company now, but it was back in Philadelphia, as I recall. He got a copy of it. A few of us studied this test and then we began to get people, under his guidance, to come in and help teach these Negroes these questions. He led the committee to drill and drill them until they could answer these questions within that limited period of time. So we had them virtually memorize the answers in order to do the test, because it would take time just to read the doggone thing! I saw it, and I'm a slow reader. I never could have passed it in twenty minutes. I think twenty minutes was the amount of time. I would have had trouble reading the damned thing in twenty minutes. But we schooled these Negroes so that a number of them passed it.

So twelve Negroes passed their examination and it looked like the Key System was up against it. Then they sent them to their doctor for an examination. The doctor found all of them physically unfit. When you looked at them, they looked like little Joe Louises, but the doctor found them physically unfit. The NAACP sent them to other doctors for examinations. Strangely, they were all fit as a fiddle when they went to other doctors. They were in the pink of condition.

Dellums: So then I wrote the doctor of the Key System company and told him that we were prepared to submit the written evidence from other doctors (I don't recall whether I sent him copies of the statements of these other doctors or not), and I told him that I would send these Negroes back. If he didn't give them an honest examination the next time, I was going to file charges against him, not only with the County Medical Association but with the state, because he could only operate with a state license.

They went back and for some peculiar reason, they were all in good condition when they went back. He passed them all, so then the Key really was on the spot. But then we were blocked because we found that the union had the closed shop agreement, which caused the old vicious cycle the NAACP had been fighting almost all of its existence.

The Negro went to the employer for a job and if he passed all these hurdles that I've just outlined with the Key System, then the company would tell him, "Well, I'd like to hire you. You're okay. I want to hire you." (He'd tell that to a Negro who wasn't qualified, you know.) "I'm anxious to hire you." But I've got an agreement with the union that I can only hire union members. So you go to the union and if they take you in, you come on back. I want you!" So they'd act like they wanted to hire him. Well, of course they were lying. Then the Negro went to the union. The union said, "Well, we don't take in unemployed people. We only take in members who are working. If the company will give you a job, we'll be proud to take you into the union." So you see, the Negro was fighting that cycle. He went to the union. The union wouldn't take him in unless he had a job and he went to the employer to get the job and he wouldn't give him the job unless he belonged to the union!

And incidentally, in those days the Carmen's Union--now that's the Amalgamated Streetcar--it's a long name. But it is referred to as the Carmen. It was the first union in the AF of L to put a positive anti-discrimination clause in its constitution. The Carmen's Union had provisions in there to discipline its members if they discriminated

Dellums: against some worker because of his race, creed or color. They could put a fine on him for it. When this happened I contacted Randolph and Randolph contacted the head of the Carmen's Union. The report came back to me that the national president called the local leadership of the Carmen's Union here and got on them about it. They bucked him and refused then to live up to their own constitution despite the international president's orders! By then of course, the rank and file membership had been pretty much brainwashed by the local leadership and they were backing him up so he could buck the national leader.

So we lost a few more years. As a matter of fact, we finally asked the President's Committee on Fair Employment Practices to come to Oakland and hold some public hearings, and air this thing out! By then the war was just about over. Congress was definitely out to kill the President's Committee. They played politics, trying to save the President's Committee on Fair Employment Practices. The committee members didn't come out themselves, but they sent a hearings officer out to conduct the hearings and they were conducted in the council chambers of the board of supervisors and there the thing came out!

This great human being, this wonderful soul who was the regional head of the wartime FEPC, Harry Kingman,* was on a leave from the YMCA at the University of California known as Stiles Hall. Harry had been able to get the information as to how this closed shop agreement came about. I knew the Carmen's Union did not in those days have a closed shop agreement, but somehow, they came up with a closed shop agreement overnight.

So it was brought out during these public hearings that the committee workers here, through Harry Kingman, were prepared to produce proof that the Key System themselves called the union in and made a deal with them to give them a closed shop agreement if they would take the responsibility of keeping Negroes off the streetcars. They accepted it because they only represented their members and in those days it wasn't easy to get members to pay union dues. And where you didn't have any kind of

*Harry L. Kingman, "Citizenship in a Democracy," 1973, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Dellums: pressure to make them pay, they would use the withdrawing of their dues against their union leaders to compel them to do their bidding. Some of the guys estimated they spent eighty percent of their time trying to get re-elected, twenty percent of the time running the union.

Near the end of the three day hearings the Key System stipulated enough to show their guilt and publicly stated that they would comply with any and all directives issued by the committee but no directives were issued because Congress killed FEPC. This made us lose a few more years. After the San Francisco Urban League agreed to place a man in Oakland one day a week we were able to start on the Key System again. The Urban League man, Kenneth Smith, took charge of the drive. My memory tells me they then were finally allowing Ken to put in practically all of his time working on this last effort to get Negroes on the streetcars. So then with the efforts of the Urban League through Ken Smith and us of the NAACP, the Key System finally removed the barriers and allowed Negroes to go to work. Of course, as soon as they gave them jobs, the unions took them in. Incidentally, by then the man heading the union when they helped the Key System keep Negroes from working on the cars, was no longer there. He had gotten into some kind of trouble.

Ken, you see, being a full-time man, could put in plenty of time, devote all of his time to helping break down the barriers in the Key System, while the rest of us had other jobs to make a living and couldn't devote the time that Ken could. So Ken began to lead the fight because of his full-time activity on it.

JH: I see how it was important to have the spare time.

Dellums: Yes. It is very unfortunate that even until this day, Negroes in Oakland do not support the NAACP in sufficient numbers, and there is not enough finance to really maintain an office with a full-time paid personnel. Even at this late date, fighting discrimination against Negroes--and of course other minorities, now, we have a large number of Mexican-Americans here and an increasing number of Orientals--

Dellums: is a full time job. It is important that we have a full-time staff working in an office. It is no longer a part-time fight. It never was a part-time fight! But even though I am a long ways from satisfied, I am not stupid enough not to admit that, on the face of it, some progress has been made--but not enough.

Royal Towns

JH: You know, you were telling me about the young man who schooled and drilled Negroes to become conductors. It made me think of Royal Towns, who I think did the same thing for firemen.

Dellums: Royal Towns was a Negro fireman and he resented the segregated house that they had in those days, but Roy, I would say, was one of the leaders among a minority of the Negro firemen who always resented the segregated department and wanted to abolish it. Roy was widely known, an able man, and he coached other young people to help them pass the examination, not only for the Fire Department but for the Police Department. He coached many Caucasians to help them get by, because he grew up, went to school and lived in North Oakland, and had many white friends. Of course Negroes were a minority in all schools there in those days and so the majority of his schoolmates were white. Therefore there were plenty of them that went to Roy when they learned that he was a fireman and an able and intelligent fellow. Of course, he helped quite a number of the Negroes to pass the examinations in those days to become a fireman.

JH: This was when there were no Negroes at all in the fire department?

Dellums: Well, Roy was among the early ones that went in. See, when the city of Oakland finally decided to hire Negro firemen, they set aside one station and they put all the Negroes in that one station. Therefore, you see, there were a number of Negro firemen that could be employed limited to that one station. So once that station was filled with

Dellums: Negroes, then there were no vacancies. So there was no way for another Negro to get in till one of those died or retired, which created a vacancy. Roy, even though he was in the place because there was no other place for him to be, never accepted it. He lived with it but Roy Towns never accepted it. He worked with the association--the NAACP--and helped our attempt to break it up. Periodically we fought that for at least a quarter of a century.

JH: Was that one firehouse to which Negroes were assigned in West Oakland?

Dellums: No. Of course today wherever you find Negroes in Oakland, they only live in two sections of Oakland. That's East Oakland or West Oakland. But that firehouse then was in North Oakland. It was out on Magnolia Street, close to 34th Street. Between 32nd and 34th, but closer to 34th Street. That was called North Oakland then. But now generally, if they're Negroes, the Tribune will say West Oakland, no matter where they live, unless they're in East Oakland. There are no Negroes any more in North Oakland or Central Oakland. If you listen to the press and the news, you get all West Oakland. But that's North Oakland. See, that station was not far from the YMCA that is located at Brockhurst and Market Street. Now Brockhurst is between 32nd and 33rd and when that building was built for the YMCA it was called "The North Oakland Branch, YMCA." It was recognized to be in North Oakland and that was close to that fire station. So it was not West Oakland.

JH: Do you remember the FEPC case involving the Los Angeles City Streetcars in 1944? For two years this company had refused to employ Negroes as streetcar and bus operators.

Dellums: No Negroes were employed to operate on streetcars in Los Angeles even though there was a shortage of workers because white workers were going to shipyards and airplane plants, where they could make more money. After the President's Committee investigators had made a thorough investigation of many complaints and were unable to solve them, the committee came out to Los Angeles to hold open hearings on them. I sat there and heard a top

Dellums: company official say, under oath, that the company had taken a survey, I think they called it, of the streetcar employees and 83-1/3 percent said they would walk off the cars the day a Negro walked on. I later heard a union official testify that they had made a survey of the workers and 87-1/3 percent said they would walk off the cars the day a Negro employee walked on. I am calling on my memory for these percentages.

Well, the committee ordered the streetcar company to employ Negroes and they said they would. The union said they would cooperate.

The union guy offered a grand idea, which was not to employ some Negroes to operate cars in the "Belt." Not even to put the first ones hired on Central Avenue. Hire and train quite a number, so the day and hour the Negroes go on the cars, they will be on them all over the city at the same time or at least on the same day. It worked. Several months later I was in Los Angeles and since I hadn't heard of any trouble I went by the union office and asked the union man how many of them walked off. He said, "One, and I think that lousy S.O.B. was going back to Texas anyway."

Police Brutality in Oakland
[Interview 4 - April 14, 1971]

JH: You said that there were a lot of police brutality cases presented to your Redress Committee.

Dellums: Yes. We had quite a lot of cases of police brutality in those days. I personally knew of plenty because I had been here on 7th Street since the mid '20's. We had our problems with the police in those days here on the street ourselves. There were a few of us who weren't afraid of the police in those days, so once in a while they had some unfavorable experiences out here with us. Once in a while we'd have to convince them that we were human beings too.

JH: Do you remember any good policemen on the street?

Dellums: Yes. I remember there was one young fellow in particular who was on the force (I don't remember his name), and he was assigned here in West Oakland--which was largely West 7th Street in those days--and then he disappeared. I knew him by sight because I'd seen him for years. He was a few years younger than myself. I just thought he was being rotated which we didn't think too much of. Finally one day I saw him downtown, I think, and he waved at me. I parked my jalopy and went to talk with him. He told me that he was transferred out of West Oakland because he didn't write enough traffic citations to Negroes out here. He told me that in those days they had a quota, and that they gave him a book of citations. They told him that that book must be used up in a certain number of days. I don't remember how many. If he didn't write all of those citations, then they jumped on him about it. Since he had grown up here in West Oakland and went to school in West Oakland, they accused him of refusing to give his Negro friends citations for traffic violations. He said if he saw any, he would. He said they said, "Oh, you can always find an excuse to give a Negro a citation. So you get rid of those tickets." So we knew of that quota system. I would call that pretty good information; I'd call that almost first-hand information that we had. In my early days with the NAACP--even in the days before I held office--we had far too many cases of police brutality and all kinds of police harrassment that my investigations indicated were correct.

Also it was common for a Negro to say that he had more money in his pocket when he was arrested than he got back when he was released. If he had been drinking or something then he didn't have much of an argument because the police would say, "He was drunk, he didn't know how much money he had." But many people got arrested for being drunk that still knew how much money they had, and when the police took it out of their pocket and booked them, they knew how much was taken. But that of course is always hard to pin down because there are no witnesses on his side. But accusations of actual physical brutality were far too numerous. We would go down and protest. I have gone down to the police

Dellums: station to protest brutality many a time alone long before Walter Gordon became active in the association because I couldn't get anyone to go with me.

When Walter was the head of the association, the two of us would go, and sometimes Rev. H.T.S. Johnson came along also. Finally we got to the place where we could get a committee to go. I remember the first real committee that we formed. Rev. Johnson and myself wanted at least seven of us and we went down to protest a police brutality charge. The reason this stays in my mind so, we met down there at the city hall and then we got together to go in and talk with the chief and I became pretty angry at what went on. I used some of my waterfront language to the chief. After we left and we got down to 14th and Clay, we stopped on the corner because there we were going to disperse to our cars which were parked in different places. And while standing there talking, it then registered with me that there was Rev. Johnson present and all that vulgarity that I had used with the chief, the names that I had called those brutal cops. I had even challenged to fight one of them if the chief would take his gun and his badge off of him. I started to apologize, Rev. Johnson stopped me and said, "Don't, you spoke my sentiments too."

As the president of the Alameda County Branch of the NAACP, I opened the hearings on Oakland police brutality in 1950 by making a statement. I didn't open with a very long statement--but much longer than reported in the press, of course. I gave a little background on the situation in Oakland and why these hearings were necessary, expressing the association's appreciation to the Assembly Interim Committee and especially to B. Rumford, in whose district the hearings were being held, for setting such a precedent, to come into Oakland to air out police brutality or charges of police brutality. Then I turned it over to the investigator, Robert Powers,* who had prepared the testimony and had the witnesses standing by.

*Robert B. Powers, "Law Enforcement, Race Relations: 1930-1960," 1971, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Dellums: Then on the third day when the hearings closed, the chairman turned to me to see if I had anything to say before the action closed. I went back to the loudspeaker and expressed my opinion on the conduct of the hearings, and, as I recall, hoping that something would come out of them. Something did because the police chief, as I recall, had just announced that Oakland had just signed a contract with Dr. Dave McIntyre of U.C. to teach human relations to Oakland police. It helped.

JH: Did the NACCP work toward getting the hearings?

Dellums: It was a joint effort between Mr. Byron Rumford,* our assemblyman, Mr. Augustus Hawkins, and myself as representing the Alameda County Branch of the NAACP. But the major credit of course would go to Rumford because anything that is held in an assemblyman's district, politically, the establishment holds him responsible for it. There are many assemblymen who wouldn't have dared stood for something like that to have been conducted in their district. At that time I doubt that it could have been held in any white assemblyman's district, other than Vernon Kilpatrick. Only Rumford or Hawkins would have allowed it and they both worked together with Vernon Kilpatrick, who was from the Compton, Los Angeles area, to put it over. And then the selection of the city in which to hold it is again where I think the prestige of Rumford came into the picture. Gus would have liked to have held it in Los Angeles.

JH: So it wasn't really a hearing about Oakland's police brutality?

Dellums: Oh yes. You see it was on Oakland, but if they had conducted it in Los Angeles it would have been on Los Angeles police brutality.

JH: Oh, either one would have been valid?

Dellums: Oh yes! Either one. There was plenty of police brutality in both of them--in San Francisco even. But Oakland was a little more pronounced and prominent than Los Angeles was, because Negroes in Northern California had a much better reputation

*W. Byron Rumford, "Legislator for Fair Employment, Fair Housing, and Public Health," 1973, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Dellums: for fighting for their rights than they did in Southern California in those days. We fought things that they had apparently accepted.

JH: Like what?

Dellums: Oh, public accommodations, for instance. I recall when there was a drugstore that had a fountain in it on Central Avenue--I believe it was on Eighth and Central--that wouldn't serve Negroes at the soda fountain. If there was anything that Negroes could buy and take out in a carton, they'd sell it to them. And Negroes there let this go on for I don't know how many years without doing anything about it. Well we wouldn't have stood for it here! Had one of these drugstores here on 7th Street in West Oakland opened something like that and refused to serve Negroes, I don't think we would have waited to sue them.

JH: Was that soda fountain in the Negro district?

Dellums: Yes. Central Avenue, where the soda fountain was, was in a Negro district. It was a very busy street. There were a lot of white people around in there, too, of course, because there were banks and businesses and whatnot there. It was kind of a streetcar transfer point. So it was a busy corner, but it was the Negro district, because the Southern Pacific Station was at Fifth and Central and from that station then heading on out Central across Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, you see, was the Negro district. It started in front of the Southern Pacific Station. When you got up to Eighth Street you were beginning to move up a little. Then finally the Negroes moved up to Twelfth and Central which became the heart of the district, where our professional men were. The YMCA was on Twelfth Street, a block from Central. That was the heart of everything, in the twenties and early thirties. The Elks--the Masonic Temple we then called it--was at Twelfth and Central. So at the time this drugstore was there, when I first saw it, why it made me fighting mad that Negroes would stand for it. Because we would have wrecked it here. I don't think that we would have waited then for a law suit. We would have just gone in there and torn it apart. They had better sense than to do that here because we wouldn't have stood for it.

VIII AUGUSTUS HAWKINS

JH: Did Augustus Hawkins speak out against discrimination in public accommodations in Los Angeles?

Dellums: I don't know. You see I didn't know Gus until 1934 and he was a youngster to me then. He was a young man in his twenties, I believe, in 1934 when I met him. He was running for the assembly. We became friends after that. But not really good friends until the 1940s.

JH: Do you think his being light-skinned affected his politics very much?

Dellums: No, no. I don't think Gus was too conscious of the fact that he was rather light. Gus never attempted to use it. I've known both of his wives and they were obviously Negro. They couldn't pass for anything else. I don't mean they were black. Both were light brown. So I don't think he was too conscious of that. He's lighter than I am. As a matter of fact, people have asked me did I ever think of passing for white. Well, it never crossed my mind that I could by trying. Even if I thought I could, I didn't have time. I was too busy fighting white people to want to be a part of them. I never was aware of Gus being color-conscious. I never was and I don't think Gus was. We were too busy trying to make all people realize that skin color is irrelevant.

JH: Did he ever say things to you like, "We are having problems with public accommodations and I wish we could change the trend?"



Left: Bay Area Kaiser Shipyard, 1943. Two welders. Standing: C. L. Dellums; Spencer Jordan, head of Negro Boilermakers Union; Ben Watkins, local musician and public relations man for Kaiser Shipyards.

Right: C. L. Dellums, seated at desk in Oakland office, 1716 7th Street. July, 1944. Picture of A. Philip Randolph in the background.



Left: Original Fair Employment Practices Commission, June 30, 1960. Appointed October 1, 1959. Seated: Carmen Warshaw, John Anson Ford; C. L. Dellums. Standing: Dwight Zook, Elton Brombacher.

Dellums: I don't recall discussing Los Angeles as such too much with Gus because we had statewide legislation in mind from the beginning. And as soon as Gus got in the legislature, for the first time we had a Negro in there that we had some confidence in. Now Gus was not the first Negro in the legislature. A Negro by the name of Fred Roberts was in the legislature before Gus. But Fred Roberts was, well, he was what I call a typical Negro Republican. He was not going to rock the boat too much. When Gus got in we got somebody we felt would sink the boat if necessary. You see, Gus introduced our first FEPC bill in the legislature in 1945. Then Gus supported and was instrumental in getting the initiative petition circulated to put FEPC on the ballot in 1946. Even though I opposed it, Gus supported it and went along with it.

I think I told you before the doggone thing probably would have been voted over if Earl Warren had not won in the June primary. We had cross-filing then where a politician could run on both the Democratic and Republican ticket and that is what Earl did. For the first time and the only time in history, I believe--I wouldn't be too certain of whether or not William Knowland ever did it. Nobody dreamed that a governor or any state-wide officer could cross-file and win both party nominations and end the election in the primary. But Earl did and then of course that changed everything because he wasn't campaigning in November and he didn't have to take a stand on FEPC and it got defeated.

I opposed the initiative for several reasons. But my primary reason was that people don't have all the rights they claim they have. My position is that nobody has a right to vote on whether or not I have a right to live, to work and to make a living. The people didn't have any business voting on my rights. I was quoted saying that it was like wanting me to arbitrate my right to breathe. Nobody would arbitrate his right to breathe nor should they vote on my rights.

But anyway, I never found Gus backwards on anything. Oh no.

IX STRUGGLE FOR A FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES
COMMISSION

JH: The FEPC initiative petition was circulated in 1946. That was the year that it appeared on the ballot.

Dellums: It appeared on the ballot in 1946 and of course it didn't go over. I was backing FEPC in '47 with Gus, but there wasn't anybody that'd talk to us on FEPC. They said, "Don't introduce a bill this year! The people just voted it down last year, you know. You'd be wasting time."

JH: What were some of the other reasons you opposed the 1946 initiative for FEPC?

Dellums: One, because we should never set a precedent that we recognize that the people have a right to vote on anything they want to vote on. The rights I have been fighting for all my life, they are now called civil rights, I call human rights, God given rights. White people have been using their majority and their control of the law enforcing agencies and firearms to prevent us from exercising our God given rights.

I also knew that even if we won we would have lost for the above reason.

I knew too that to lose would set the fight for the FEP law back at least a decade. That 1946 initiative contributed greatly to the reasons it took fourteen years to get the law. If the people could vote the law over, they could also vote it out. And we would have weakened our position before the courts.

Dellums: We were never really asking white people to grant or give us any rights. Only to stop using their majority and power in preventing us from exercising our God-given rights. Gus and I talked it over and said, "Okay, we won't make much of an issue this time." But we were right back in '49 and Gus introduced it again in '49. He did quite a job in making some headway on it. Then of course, Byron Rumford came into the legislature in 1949 and he and Gus started alternating. Byron would carry the ball for FEPC in one session and in the next session Gus would carry it. So that they could concentrate on FEPC in one session and on other things in the other sessions.

Byron, in all fairness to both of them, justly developed to where I think the other legislators, in due time, had greater respect for him in some way than they did for Gus. I could never figure out why. Those things sometimes are hard to explain, but he seemed to have more influence with the other legislators than Gus did. Actually, I feel sure I do know why but I can't prove it; therefore, why fall out with one you like over your opinion on such an issue?

JH: You mentioned that Gus introduced a FEPC bill in '45. Who was he sponsoring it for?

Dellums: That was the first one and the National March on Washington movement in 1941 headed by Randolph, created the whole concept. Here is where it came from. You see, we selected five states for FEPC bills that year, 1945. California was one of them. As I recall, Gus had the legislative council in Sacramento draft the bill for him.

JH: Do you know if Earl Warren had anything to do with getting the FEPC bill presented in the legislature?

Dellums: I feel absolutely certain that he didn't, because I'm mindful of the fact that after the New York law had been in effect for a few years, Walter Gordon was going back to Washington as a representative of the State Adult Authority. He was the chairman and an appointee of Governor Warren. A national meeting of such officials was being held in Washington and Walter went. The governor asked

Dellums: Walter to take a couple of extra days while he was back there and go down to New York and look into this FEPC and see how it was working. He said if everything seemed to be working all right, he was going to endorse the bill in California.

Walter came back all enthused about it because it was working; the people had accepted it and they were proud of it, Governor Dewey was proud of it. He supported it--and he was a Republican--and signed it. It went through the New York legislature with his backing and his support. So Walter was very proud of the report that he gave Warren and he told me he was confident the governor was going to publicly endorse and support the bill that year after his report. But he did not do it. At least not publicly.

JH: Do you know what year that was?

Dellums: It would have to be after '46. It was after the initiative was voted down here. Let's see, the first bill was introduced in 1945 and I don't think a committee even had a hearing on it, so it had to be after that. Then you see, the legislature met in the odd-numbered years then. They only met every other year and the election was in the even-numbered year. The legislature met in the even-numbered years for budgetary purposes only. That's why the bill was introduced in '45 because in 1946 they would only hold a budgetary session for a few months and then we'd always refer to the odd-numbered years as the legislative years. They didn't meet every year like they do now. This is new; meeting and handling legislation every year.

So I don't recall what year Walter went to New York, but it had to be an odd-numbered year. If I was going to hazard a guess, I would guess '49, somewhere up in there.

Byron Rumford and Gus began alternating in 1951. That was Byron's [Rumford] first time introducing the FEPC bill. Byron introduced it in '51 and of course we didn't get any place with it because we had no support in the legislature. Then two years later, of course, it was Gus's time. Gus introduced it in 1953.

[Interview 5 - May 12, 1971]

JH: What efforts did the NAACP make to get the 1951 bill passed?

Dellums: Well, NAACP held a mobilization up in Sacramento put together by Mrs. Tarea Pittman largely, and issued in the name of the regional chairman of the NAACP, I believe.

JH: And who was that?

Dellums: That was me. It was a successful mobilization. A number of labor people came out and practically all of the statewide Jewish organizations, of course, came out. That was pretty much the audience. The California branches of the NAACP were well-represented. But as a result of that, we decided that we needed to set up a more permanent statewide organization, realizing of course that it would take some years to get such a law on the statute books.

So I believe it was late 1952 that Franklin Williams, who had come out then and was the executive office of the West Coast Region, known as Region #1 of the NAACP that consisted then of the seven western states. I believe it is nine now, with Hawaii and Alaska. The national office in New York sent Frank out.

JH: The NAACP had certainly developed at this point from where it was when you joined in the late twenties. There is a regional set-up now.

Dellums: Yes. The region was set up in 1945, I believe. I know that some of them say it was '44 and some say it was '45. I am not certain but I think it was '45 that the region was set up. Frank Williams was not the original regional secretary. Noah Griffin was the first one and then later they found something else for Noah to do and Frank was sent out--a very able young man and did a tremendous job! Under Frank's leadership it was built tremendously. Then I won't go into all the ramifications of how the NAACP was broken down into area conferences that proved big.

But for the time being let me tell you about getting the FEPC bill through. In late 1952 I had

Dellums: a few conferences with Earl Rabb and some of our other friends and associates in the civil rights field--labor and Jewish. Most of the time it was the same people, both Jewish and labor representatives. As a result of us conferring a few times, we brought in a few more people, and finally there were about five of us, including Frank Williams, who really laid the groundwork and kind of agreed among ourselves who the officers would be. Then a statewide call was issued, my memory tells me, over my signature and I believe over Frank Williams's. I remember Frank at first asking the statewide organizations to send representatives to San Francisco to meet there at Earl Rabb's headquarters, 45 First Street, for the purpose of discussing the feasibility and possibility of building a statewide organization.

As a result of those conferences and the issuance of this call, these representatives came, including a representative of the AF of L and a representative of the CIO. The AF of L and the CIO were still split then.

JH: Did C.J. Haggerty come at the first call?

Dellums: I am not certain about Haggerty, but I think he did. John Despol responded. When we organized and elected officers, I was elected chairman, and both Haggerty and Despol agreed to act as co-chairmen along with Nat Colley and Ed Roybal (he was then in the city council of Los Angeles, now a congressman) and Msgr. O'Dwyer of Southern California. Also a wonderful lady that had worked with us in the civil rights field, Mrs. Josephine Duveneck, acted as treasurer. Bill Becker was selected and accepted to act as the executive secretary. Then we got Max Mont of the Jewish Labor Committee of Los Angeles to act as the Southern California secretary, working under Bill Becker. As a result of all of this, we called a statewide meeting in Fresno and then the movement was officially accepted and launched.

JH: So the Fresno meeting was much larger, in terms of people present?

Dellums: Oh, yes. That was a much larger meeting and had several times more than this group that came to San Francisco. As a matter of fact, not more than a dozen were invited even to come to San Francisco to set up this meeting. But in Fresno we had representatives from local labor unions and from many of the branches of the NAACP. There were no branch representatives in the first meeting. There were just Frank Williams and me representing the NAACP--and Mrs. Pittman, of course, was with us in all of these things.

Then the committee was launched and before we knew it we were into the '52 election and then in '53 the bill made some headway. It was Mr. Hawkins' year and Gus Hawkins introduced the bill. I couldn't pay too much tribute to Gus Hawkins and Frank Williams for their ability and work. My memory tells me that that is the bill that Gus got through the assembly for the first time. But of course you couldn't get it out of a committee in the senate. I don't think we even got a hearing in the senate on it. But there was no way to get it out. So finally Gus caught a senate bill that was almost a "must" bill in the senate. It had gone through the senate and now it was in the assembly and Gus was able to get the assembly to go along with him in amending this senate bill. He tacked the essential parts of his bill for FEPC onto the senate bill. That forced the senate for the first time to take a stand. They voted it down! As I recall, a one hundred percent partisan vote. I don't think we got one Republican vote for it! They eliminated it in the senate, of course, by voting the amendment off. But it gave us something to work on then because we saw where the senators were and as a matter of fact, I think that I can truthfully state that largely as a result of the efforts put forward by the Cal Fair Employment Practices Committee--and incidentally with money that was furnished to the Cal committee by the California Labor movement--we were able to get one of the senators, Abshire, from Sonoma County, that went on record against the FEPC bill out of office. His name was F. Presley Abshire from Sonoma County. We were able to get some volunteer help. As a matter of fact there was a minister, I've forgotten his name, who went to Abshire's district up north of

Dellums: San Francisco. This minister went up there and did a yeoman's work. Once in a while, I run into another man who gave a lot of help also. His name is Hugh Sheen. This minister and Sheen were helping to defeat Senator Abshire who voted to eliminate Gus's amendment, which put the senators on record as being either for FEPC or against it. I think the fact that we helped defeat Abshire had a tremendous effect on the senate later on.

JH: Did you say this happened in 1953?

Dellums: Nineteen fifty-three was not an election year. I believe this defeat was a little later than that. But my memory tells me it was Gus's AB 900 that he got through the assembly and amended it on to a senate bill. The senate eliminated it, but they had to do it by roll call. So it gave us a line up on the senators and we knew for the first time who our friends were and who our enemies were in the senate. That is for sure.

JH: What did the mobilization that was called for two days in March of '53 entail?

Dellums: Several hundred people came to the mobilization on a weekend. We had a public meeting with several speakers speaking at this meeting. Then the people who came to Sacramento broke down into assembly and senatorial groups. We were trying to arrange beforehand for legislators to be in their offices on Monday morning after the mobilization so that everyone who could stay over then would go to their offices to talk to them first thing Monday morning and to try to get them to vote for FEPC.

It was a lobbying--just hundreds of citizen-lobbyists up there. They all represented labor unions, local labor unions, Jewish organizations, and NAACP branches, pretty much. There were some individuals, of course, who came. But they largely came as representatives of organizations. Then various civil rights organizations and church groups sent representatives to the mobilization that could stay in Sacramento until Monday. So all of it was pressure that built up every two years until 1959 when the bill was voted over.

JH: In 1953 did you have conferences with Earl Warren, trying to get him to support the FEPC bill?

Dellums: No. Before the first mobilization we had in Sacramento, I wrote the governor and asked for a conference and I named the people to be on the committee. They were those people that you will see on that early Cal Committee letterhead. Obviously there wasn't anyone on that letterhead that was easily criticized except C.L. Dellums. But the governor did not grant us a conference. So we held a meeting at a downtown church, which was referred to as a white church, close to the capitol, on Sunday afternoon. I wrote all eighty of the members of the California assembly and the forty members of the senate inviting them to come to the meeting and sit on the platform. They could have something to say.

Only three showed up--obviously Gus Hawkins and Byron Rumford were two of those. They were all white except those two. But the only Caucasian member of the 120 who came was Vernon Kilpatrick, an assemblyman from Los Angeles. He sat on the platform and when I introduced him, I gave him credit that I knew he deserved, and he spoke and he mentioned the fact that it was the first time that anybody had publicly said a good word for him and in his way he let everybody know how he felt, how he appreciated the ones who called this meeting, and the emcee of the meeting who introduced him. Then, the overwhelming majority of his district in Los Angeles was white. It was not a Negro district like it is now, so I had a great appreciation for him for coming out. I returned the favor by going to Los Angeles campaigning for him in two subsequent elections after that and helped get him--and so did Gus--and helped get him re-elected.

In 1958 I went up to Sacramento during the budgetary session. Byron Rumford and Gus Hawkins and myself went in to see Senator Hugh Burns of Fresno, a well-known Democrat--at least he carried that label. He never was a Democrat, certainly not a liberal. But through his power in the senate, he could assign a bill to any committee that he wanted it to go to. He didn't know our motives at the time, but I had reasons to believe that we were

Dellums: going to be able to reconstruct the Senate Labor Committee, so that in '59 we would have a more favorable committee. We did succeed in doing that, largely through the Cal Committee's efforts.

JH: How did you get it reconstructed?

Dellums: Well, after every election they have to make committee assignments all over again. See, the assembly is not a continuing body. So every two years it is legally a new assembly.

JH: New men come in.

Dellums: New men, even though they might be the same men getting reelected. But the entire assembly is elected for a two year term. So it is like the House of Representatives. It cannot--like the senate--return in a continuing body. So the assemblymen, same as the senators, will make their requests for their committees that they want to serve on in numerical sequence. So we went to senators that we understood were favorable to us and asked them to make the Senate Labor Committee their number one choice. We went to men with seniority like Dick Richards, senator from Los Angeles, and John Holmdahl of Oakland then. He's back in the senate now.

Now none of those guys had any reason to believe that it was possible for us to find out how they made their requests. My memory tells me that not a damn one of them made it his number one request, even though some of our friends got on--including Dick Richard. But Dick made it his number two choice. I don't believe my memory is failing on this and my memory tells me John Holmdahl made it his number three choice. I don't think a single one of those guys really made it number one.

JH: Did they say they would?

Dellums: Oh, yes! They promised us they would make it number one.

But now back to going in during this budgetary session, having this heart-to-heart talk with Hugh Burns. We asked him not to move the FEPC bill in '59

Dellums: from the Labor Committee because we were always afraid of it going to Luther Gibson's committee. That was the graveyard of the senate. Hugh Burns had the power to do this because he was chairman pro tem of the senate; therefore, he was chairman of the Rules Committee. He had the power.

So we left there fine. He said not to worry, he had no reason to change it. It always had gone to the Labor Committee, so it would go on to the Labor Committee this time, we thought.

But in 1959 when the bill was introduced Hugh Burns attempted to assign that bill to Luther Gibson's (from Vallejo) graveyard committee. I think it was the Government Economy and Efficiency Committee. But it was recognized that if you want a bill killed, send it over to Luther Gibson; then it would be killed.

So when the late George Miller, our friend from Martinez, saw what Hugh was trying to pull, he faced a showdown on it and he beat him and sent that bill on to the Labor Committee so that we could get it out of the committee and on to the floor. Then of course, as you know, it was adopted in 1959. But those are just some of the things that go on behind the scenes the general public never know about. We had reasons to go to Hugh Burns, because we knew once the Senate Labor Committee became favorable, there might be an effort made to send it to some other committee.

That's all a part of the way politics is played.

JH: I've heard of that Government Economy and Efficiency Committee before. I think there was a hearing before committee in 1953 on FEPC. So maybe this is why the bill had so much trouble, because it was being politically assigned to the committee.

Dellums: In 1953 I don't think it would have made any difference which committee it was assigned to. We just didn't have the vote. If you check the records of the voting you can see it was almost a solid Republican vote against it. So we just didn't have

Dellums: a chance to get it out of there in those days. But sending it to Luther Gibson's committee meant the death knell of it. His administrative assistant came to the hearing in 1959 when he certainly knew--all of them knew--that bill was going through. We had plenty of people committed that it was going to go through. I think I told you all the constitutional officers on the Democratic ticket campaigned openly for it--Pat Brown, all of them. And all of them were elected with one exception. We did not elect the secretary of state. He was the only one not elected and, of course, the secretary of state was the only one who didn't come out for FEPC. Jordon was still secretary of state then, you know. Everybody knew it was going to go through but still Gibson's administrative assistant came before the Senate Labor Committee, Gibson was supposed to be ill--more than likely drunk--at the time of the hearing. But at any rate, his administrative assistant was an able man--a very able man--and he came in with thirty-one amendments to FEPC before the Senate Labor Committee, trying to weaken it. He was wasting time and they knew it!

They tolerated it as long as they could and the chairman tried to speed him up and brush him off and limit his time and let him know that he knew that those amendments didn't have a chance to go through. He was wasting the committee's time! And as I recall, none of his amendments got through. Some amendments got through at the last minute, but they didn't come from him. They came from the late Senator Gene McAteer of San Francisco. When the Senate Labor Committee's hearings on the FEPC bill were almost over, Senator Eugene McAteer came rushing in and asked to address the committee, saying he had just come from the governor and had some amendments the governor wanted. From memory, I think there were five. I can't recall all of them. However, the most important one was to change the bill from providing for a full-time commission to a part-time one. I think another one was to take enforcement power out of Section 1421 investigations. A comparison of the bill that passed the assembly and then sent to the senate with the law as adopted in 1959 will reveal them because I don't think any others got any place.

JH: Well, how do you explain the tremendous support that the FEPC bill got in '59, when it was hardly supported by legislators in '53?

Dellums: I think it was largely brought about as a result of the around the year work that was carried on by the Cal Committee and those mobilizations in Sacramento. Each mobilization got larger and larger. Every odd numbered year we met there and it started from the original group of maybe a hundred to pretty close to a thousand by 1959. The Cal Committee had built up a mailing list of over five thousand carefully selected individuals, each of whom was outstanding in his community or in his profession or vocation, somebody with prestige and capable of influencing people. We had a very select list of over five thousand and we maintained a year-round contact with those on that mailing list. Obviously, during the legislative session they received much literature and letters and everything from us. Then in the even-numbered year, in which there was no legislation being adopted, we would carry on probably two or three mailings throughout the year. We kept up this educational work and this pressure work on them.

Then there is nothing like confrontation. So when you can get a good delegation that will go in their pockets and pay their own expenses to go to Sacramento and then go into the senator's office, the assemblyman's office, right from his own district and have an eyeball to eyeball confrontation with him, letting him know how they feel, that they want him to vote for FEPC, that the hour of discriminating against people because of their race or religion was growing old, that it had to be cut out. Of course it is indefensible. Who could stand up and say that he believed in discrimination? Nobody ever believed in discrimination, so you wonder how it lasted so long and is still here! People have to have a reason to give up their prejudices. The FECP law changed the people. It is a form of education. The best form of education is legislation. Organization, education and agitation helps. And of course force. By law or judicial decree. Then people actually see that their prejudices, which are fears, were largely imaginary and everything is really better.

JH: Were the influential people that you sent letters to year round the delegates to the legislative sessions?

Dellums: No, the majority of those people on our letterheads and on our mailing list did not come to the mobilizations. But obviously with a mailing list of between five and seven thousand, and with our mobilizations running eight, nine hundred--probably the last one in '59 went over a thousand, obviously then very few of those people came.

We wanted them to use their influence at home in their districts and on their own politicians--their senators and assemblymen--because I think it makes a difference when a politician gets a letter from John and Jane Doe and when he gets a letter from Dr. and Mrs. Clark Kerr--to use names that would register with people--even though they may not have near as much influence as Mr. and Mrs. Jane and John Doe. But he never heard of them before. It has some influence to get a letter with a letterhead. It has influence for them particularly, to get a handwritten letter, not on a letterhead but from his district. It doesn't have to be too well-written. Even if it's got some misspelling in it, why, it is all right; anyone who will take the time to sit down and write a politician a longhand letter has tremendous influence. Most people don't write many letters and certainly not to a politician. Therefore these people don't forget their letter to an office holder. And when they see him they may very well ask him what he did about the matter they wrote him about. That scares the hell out of the guy if its during his campaign for reelection.

JH: Common people are very influential.

Dellums: Very much so. And they don't know it themselves! But they carry tremendous influence with politicians.

Our best influence were "big name" people. They could get a legislator to introduce a bill. Jane and John Doe might have trouble getting a politician to introduce a bill, but the "name" people then would have some influence in getting him to introduce it. But now to round up the other

Dellums: legislators to vote for it, is where Jane and John Doe comes into the act.

JH: As I understand it, the committee received most of its financial support from labor.

Dellums: Labor and NAACP branches supplied over ninety percent of the money. Labor unions, the local labor unions and the NAACP branches throughout the state. The additional money came from individuals. There were individuals all over the state who would send a contribution every year or every time we would ask them to, you know. You develop people. In a pinch there are certain people we could write a letter to, but generally we'd pick up a telephone and call them.

For instance, I could pick up the phone and call Dr. Hudson down in Los Angeles, Claude Hudson. If I told Dr. Hudson that our committee was facing something, that we had to get out a statewide mailing and I needed one hundred bucks for stamps, Claude would send it! And there were other people like that.

More than once Bill Becker and myself put the bee on the California Labor Federation for four or five hundred dollars and got it! In a crisis. But there were any number of individuals scattered through the state that we could call and get fifty or a hundred bucks out of at almost anytime, you know, to get mailings out, to get literature out and maintain the year round contact. That is how the money was raised.

I think when Bill and myself were trying to total up, after the bill went through in '59, we found that we had raised and spent almost \$100,000 during the campaign since Bill had been the executive secretary to get that bill through and carry on the year round educational work.

It was a voluntary group, nobody was drawing any salaries out of it. I would never accept expense money to go to Sacramento nor anything. I always felt that that was one more little contribution that I could make myself, even when Frank Williams tried to get me to take expense money from

Dellums: the NAACP, because Frank knew that sometimes it was kind of a sacrifice for me to continue to do it. But I wouldn't accept anything. I would go anyway. I would never accept expense money from the NAACP to go to any branch anyplace in the state to make a speech, when I was a speechmaker.

JH: Your regular job was with the Brotherhood?

Dellums: Yes, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. I've made my living with it for over forty years--such as I made.

The Fair Employment Practices Commission

JH: But the commissioners who were placed on the FEPC by Governor Brown were paid, weren't they?

Dellums: No, no. It is a part-time commission. I wouldn't have ever been on it if it had been a full-time job or anything because I wouldn't give up my life's work in the Brotherhood or the civil rights field without any strings on me for all the money in California! So no, the commissioners get a per diem for the days they work for FEPC.

JH: John Anson Ford was made the first chairman of the commission. What did you think of him as a chairman?

Dellums: Well, John obviously was a good presiding officer, a good chairman, because he had held public office so long--not just public office. He served in the County of Los Angeles on the Board of Supervisors for about a quarter of a century and two or three different times he was the chairman. Presiding over a body meeting before the public, you learn how to run a meeting. Otherwise you stay in trouble. John was a good presiding officer and John is an extremely able man and had a wonderful mind and was very valuable to the committee. For the first chairman, I don't think Pat Brown could have made a better selection.

Dellums: Now I say that because with all of the organized employer groups and the State Chamber of Commerce fighting it for fourteen years, there was enough propaganda spread throughout the state to frighten a large number of employers. They had been brain-washed into thinking that FEPC would be a witch-hunting group and that it would make life miserable for them, that it was just something they couldn't live with. They were frightened over it. And Governor Brown was a little conscious of that. He wanted the first chairman to be somebody well-known in the business community in the state, somebody they respected and therefore would be able to allay some of their fears. John was such a man and served that purpose. John had the reputation of being a liberal--of a sort. John was a wonderful man, but not a great, shining liberal. But I think the world and all of him and reluctantly even say that he wasn't a flaming liberal. But he wasn't.

JH: Was he chairman when you became vice-chairman in '64?

Dellums: No. After John served the four years as chairman, Governor Brown appointed Carmen Warschaw as the chairman. Carmen had always missed too many meetings--and knowing that she was going to miss some meetings, she wanted a vice-chairman. We had never had a vice-chairman. So she first asked me and I wouldn't accept.

Then she asked Elton Brombacher would he be her vice-chairman. Elton didn't catch on. He didn't realize that he was being Carmen's vice-chairman and not vice-chairman of the commission. He accepted and the very next meeting Carmen didn't show up. But she attempted to run the commission through Elton on the long-distance telephone. Elton blew his stack when he saw that she was making a stooge out of him, and was going to run the commission through him. So he came to me and said, "Now I see why you wouldn't be this gal's vice-chairman. I am not vice-chairman of the commission, I'm her vice-chairman." So he resigned. Then she again turned to me and I told her that I wouldn't be her vice-chairman, but I would accept a vice-chairmanship of the commission at the request of the governor himself and appointed by the governor, and not by her.

Dellums: So finally she said, "All right, if that is the only way you'll accept," she said, "then the governor is going to ask you to do it."

So I did get a letter from the governor asking me to accept his appointment as vice-chairman of the commission. Now that I was the vice-chairman of the commission by appointment of the governor, Carmen knew better than to call long distance and tell me how to do anything.

JH: The job of the chairman was to assign cases to the commissioners including himself.

Dellums: Assign the cases to the various commissioners, including himself and to preside over the meetings. Of course a chairman is the commission between meetings. He is the one who makes decisions on matters that come up when the commission is not in session if the subject matter cannot wait for the next meeting. He is the official spokesman for the commission.

JH: It must have been a large staff besides the seven commissioners.

Dellums: No, we have a tiny staff. By comparison, New York, Michigan, and most of the civilized states have an FEPC to make California a second-class state, when it comes to a staff and budget.

JH: Has it always been a small staff?

Dellums: Always has been. My position has been and still is that it is the most important commission in this state and has always been treated like the stepchild of state agencies. A lot of people don't like to hear me say that, but that is what I believe. It is the only official agency in this state with the sole task of working in the field of human relations; therefore, I say it is the most important commission within the state. The most important unsolved question in this state, in this nation, and in this world, is this question of race and color. Therefore the people involved in it have a tremendously important task and ought to have an ample budget and ample staff, and our commission is a long ways

Dellums: from that. We have just about one third the budget and the staff that we ought to have.

New York has a budget of roughly three million dollars and California has less than one million dollars--and I think you know the difference in the population, and the minority population. California has one of the most militant minority populations in the nation--and it is a powder keg. Yet it is not properly funded.

JH: Well, in 1965 it occurred to me that maybe Carmen Warschaw finally gave up the chairmanship, and that you graduated to that position.

Dellums: Carmen's term was up.

JH: How long is the term?

Dellums: Four years.

JH: I see.

Dellums: Now in setting up the commission, you have to stagger the original terms in order to set a commission up so that everybody doesn't go off at the same time. When they set the commission up in 1959, John Ford, the chairman, was given the four year term. Elton Brombacher was given the three year term. I asked for and accepted the two year term because I didn't intend to stay. Carmen Warschaw and Dwight Zook then got the two one-year terms. So we kidded them because they were a cinch to serve five years. Obviously after the first year, Brown would appoint them for a full term.

When Carmen's first full term was up, she asked the governor not to reappoint her. Then the governor made me the chairman. When my term was up he reappointed me and made me chairman, also. But my term as chairman didn't last very long because the election came along shortly after that and the governor was defeated and the first official act the new governor did, as far as FEPC was concerned, was to remove me from the chairmanship and make his first appointment the chairman.

JH: That's strange. Hadn't employers become less afraid of who the chairman would be by then?

Dellums: Oh, yes. Yes, by the time that I was made chairman it didn't create a ripple. I think the overwhelming majority of employers by then would have defended FEPC if anybody had attempted to repeal it and eliminate it. They realized that it really served a good purpose because it helped them solve problems, it helped advise them on affirmative work, so that they learned how to integrate their staff and bring in minorities. Earlier many of them just didn't know. In the early days of FEPC I met employers that had never heard of a Negro newspaper in the state and they had no Negro connections at all. Many of them secured the employees they needed through other employees. If they had a vacancy, the employees would have a friend come and apply. Well, if you have all white employees and you are going to get additional help through them, it is going to remain all white. So they found that the commission was good.

Then they also found that merely because a minority makes a complaint against them that the commission wasn't taking the position that the employer was guilty of discrimination. There are honorable people on the commission and we handled cases honorably and honestly. I am the only one, I think, they ever were afraid of. But I still think I am a man of integrity. I wouldn't persecute anybody. If the investigation indicated that the person had been discriminated against, then some redress must come about. If there is no evidence, we don't have a case.

I've had a lot of cases that I've firmly believed that the person was discriminated against but I couldn't talk the employer into doing anything about it and we couldn't get any evidence that would justify a public hearing on it. So we would just have to leave it go as having insufficient evidence to prove discrimination. Then, in many of the cases, I could see immediately from the first part of the investigation that there was no discrimination involved, and they were closed out. Those employers were never called into the office. So we have never

Dellums: made a practice of persecuting people. I still live pretty much, in many respects, by the Golden Rule. In that respect I do. I treat people like I would like them to treat me.

JH: But at least the new governor didn't take you off the commission altogether.

Dellums: Insofar as the commission is concerned, I should be off. It is too heavy. I don't have the time, with my job heavier than ever. It is just too much. I keep my family and my doctor worried all the time, telling me to slow down. But I don't know how to slow down.

I was reappointed by Governor Brown in 1965 with my term expiring in 1969. Therefore I was the last one that Governor Reagan could reach. By the time he could get to me, he'd been in there about three years and times changed. By then there were ample Republicans asking him to reappoint me. Then he came to me himself and asked me to accept an appointment from him, and I did. That's why I am still on the commission. And I believe I am still needed.

JH: Well I believe that it was in 1968 that you became President of the Brotherhood, wasn't it?

Dellums: Yes. At our 1968 convention Mr. Randolph announced that he was going to retire and would not stand for reelection. When the election of officers came, he took the floor, making quite a speech in nominating me as his successor. I was unanimously elected. Three years later, 1971, Mr. Randolph again nominated me, this time based upon stewardship of the Brotherhood during those three years. Again the election was unanimous.

JH: Whatever happened to Milton P. Webster, who was once the first vice-president?

Dellums: Well, Milton P. Webster was one of the vice-presidents. The numbers had no significance. We were all equal in stature. Milton P. Webster had a sudden heart attack in the lobby of the hotel in Miami Beach, Florida and died right there in the lobby of the

Dellums: hotel. He was down there with Mr. Randolph attending an executive committee meeting of the AF of L-CIO. He went down there with Mr. Randolph and took ill there in the lobby and just collapsed.

JH: Was this in the last few years?

Dellums: Yes. It was 1965--February, 1965.

JH: I just assume that Mrs. Dellums must be very patient because she is married to such a busy man--so busy, first on the national labor scene, then in the NAACP, and then of course, in statewide civil rights.

Dellums: Well, she's paid a price because in the early days of the Brotherhood, things were rather hectic and there was a few years in which threats were common. She used to have to have the unlisted telephone number changed two and three times a year, trying to keep down the annoyance. They would resort to calling her, because they soon discovered that threatening me didn't mean anything. So they were trying to reach me by frightening her. She went through a period of time in which if I wasn't home by 1:00 A.M. she would start calling the hospitals, the police, and would worry to death. Any time I got in that jalopy and started driving out of town someplace, she paid a price for it. We had reason to believe that attempts would be made on my life and so by her being left alone so much because of the busy schedule that I always carried on, my wife lived through a period of danger and I guess loneliness.

X THE 1934 WATERFRONT STRIKE

Dellums: Well, an example of the things I'd get involved in was the 1934 waterfront fight and strike: the making of Harry Bridges. I participated in meetings on this side of the bay to give morale speeches, to help keep the pickets and the strike going. Sometimes that was rather dangerous. I don't know who was responsible for it, but I went through a period in which I found people in cars very close to the house. After I was in at night and in the house, those cars would disappear. I found out by going right up to the car and seeing who was in it, they were longshoremen, Teamsters, and they were there partly to see that nothing happened to me.

Then in the '36-'37 strike lockout, Roger Lapham decided, since they were having a lockout also, to not attempt to break it by force and to win the fight through the bar of public opinion, debating it with Harry Bridges. I participated in meetings on this side of the bay to help keep that going.

In the 1934 strike I recall they were having a big meeting on 7th Street here--supposedly a quiet meeting of strikebreakers and the strikers found out about it and who was running it. So they came to me and asked me if I would go into that meeting and attempt to talk them out of strikebreaking. The shipowners had two big ships out in the middle of the bay. They were rounding up strikebreakers and they'd slip them down to the waterfront in the dark and put them in some kind of little boats and take them out to these ships in the middle of the

Dellums: bay and they would live on the ships. Then they'd take them to the waterfront to work and then take them back to the ships so they'd never get on the land where the strikers might get to them and crack their heads.

So I went up to this meeting; they'd drummed up 150 in there, I guess. It was packed to standing capacity all over. There was a white man and a Negro running the meeting. When the strikers asked me to go they said they'd furnish me ample bodyguards to protect me. I told them I didn't need that. If the guys decided to do you in, in a meeting like that, you'd be killed before the guards could get to you anyway, so I wasn't afraid of that. They insisted, so finally I said, "Well, just give me one guy, not over two."

"All right. We'll send two."

I said, "No, let me name them. I want Joe White to go with me." Joe was big and husky. He had never been on the waterfront, but I had gotten him to join in. You could join the Longshoremen's Union for fifty cents and I'd give the Negroes the fifty cents until I'd run out of fifty cent pieces and I couldn't spare any more. This was during the strike. Then I got them to let them come on in and they could pay the fifty cents later, so they could join the picket line and help them win.

So I took Joe and a fellow named Humphrey, another big, husky fellow along with me. Funny thing about it, I got inside and I wormed my way pretty close up to the front in this mob that was stacked in there and Joe White stood in the door. He didn't come inside, you know. I kept wondering why this big bruiser didn't come in. I thought he was afraid. Later in the meeting I asked for the floor. Of course the white man turned to the Negro. They whispered and they told me to sit down, that I couldn't take the floor. I couldn't speak.

So I turned to the crowd and I said, "Most of you fellows know me by sight. I am C.L. Dellums. I want to speak to you." Apparently most of them knew the name. So I said, "If you want to hear what

Dellums: I have to say, make this guy shut up and let me talk." And so they did! They started raising a row in there. So they made the leaders sit down and let me talk. So I gave them a good rabble-rousing. I gave them first a good educational talk on labor and civil rights where we had so much in common. Then brought in some rabble-rousing on it, too.

Then I asked them to give me their word, and I told them, "I know you'll keep your word with me, I always keep mine with you. Give me your word that you will not break the strike. All who will not, stand."

And they almost stood to a man! So I said, "OK, since we're not going to break the strike, the meeting is over! Let's get the hell out of here!"

And they all started getting out and the Negro and the white man stood there trying to hold the audience! So that broke up the meeting; they went on out. When we got outside, I jumped on Joe for standing at the door where he could run and not coming inside.

He said, "Run, hell! All I had to do is just raise my hand. Anybody that acted like they were going to get violent or anything with you," he said, "all I had to do is just raise my hand. You never saw so many longshoremen and teamsters in your life! They would have torn this building to pieces to get to you." I said, "You're kidding. You were ready to run." So he said, "All right. Let's walk around here and look at these cars. We walked all around the block. It was just filled with cars. They were mostly whites, too, you know. They were there. "Who are you guys?" They said, "You must be Dellums. We're here to see that nothing happens to you. To get you out as quick as we could."

I said, [laughs] "There wasn't anybody going to do anything to me in there. There were plenty of people in there who wouldn't stand for anything to happen to me. Even if they disagreed with me, they weren't going to let anything happen."

Dellums: "I staked my life on these people on 7th Street in those days," I said, "I fight their battles--and they know it! They are not going to let anybody do anything to me. Not if they can help it."

And they wouldn't have then. I had just that much confidence in them. They wouldn't have stood for anything. You can't keep these things secret, you know. In the next two or three days my wife knows all about it.

"Dad, what have you been into?"

"I've been into nothing unusual." I'd tell her.

"I heard about you down there in that meeting. You could have got killed in there!"

I said, "No, nobody would have done anything to me."

So she paid a price to stay with me all these years during such hectic times.

JH: Did you meet her in Texas or in California?

Dellums: I got out of there. I left Texas by design. California was chosen. So I met her here in Oakland. She came to Oakland about a year after I did.

JH: It seems to me that you've become an advocate for black laborers in general, and not just of porters.

Dellums: I was an advocate for the rights of labor period! It didn't make any difference to me. In 1934, during that first big strike, there were only two Negro crews on the whole waterfront--two Jim Crow crews, all Negroes, on the whole waterfront and they worked, as I recall, on the Grace Line and the Luckenbach docks. And no other place. Of course I had a double interest in that. I was interested in them having a real union again because all the workers needed a union. Of course I was interested in breaking up the segregation on the waterfront and

Dellums: breaking up the shape-up system and providing for Negroes to be allowed to work on there, because they were human beings and had a right to work--and should work without discrimination. But I would fight for an all-white union in trouble as quick as I'd fight for an all-black union. I fight for the rights of the working man, the rights of the poor. So I wouldn't stay out of a fight because there were no Negroes in it. And I don't think I'd get in it any quicker or with any more zeal or anything.

I think back a lot of times when I was a kid. I think I had one fight that was all mine. I think in the rest of the fights I've been in, I was taking up for somebody that seemed to be being pushed around because he wouldn't fight back and I would take up his fight. I would fight back.

I'd tell them, "Stop picking on him. He doesn't want to fight you. If you just want to pick on somebody, I'll fight you. Pick on me!," hoping most of the time that my bluff worked. Most of the time it did work. But once in a while some guy took a swing at me. But I think I had one fight all on my own. It was with a little white kid, whose bigger brother and my older brother were good friends and they went rabbit-hunting together. The white kid and I went along with our brothers. This kid and I didn't get along and eventually we had a fight while we were out hunting. I don't think we really wanted to fight. Our brothers got tired of us fussing and made us fight. I generally got into all my other fights by fighting for somebody else.

As I told you, when we developed a union and went into the AF of L, it was with much national criticism from the Negro press, so-called Negro leaders. They didn't know anything about labor, had been brainwashed that labor was an enemy of the Negro and that the employer was their friends--which was all wet and all wrong. But we went into the AF of L for a reason and with a mission--that is, according to Randolph and myself. We were the only ones generally that saw the Brotherhood as a racial movement and as part of the civil rights struggle. Our reason for going in the AF of L was

Dellums: because as a labor union we belonged inside. We believed then and still believe that the Negro will never really be a first-class citizen until he is into the mainstream and all of its tributaries of American life. Organized labor certainly is one of the mainstreams of American life. That was the reason we went in. We belonged in the mainstream of the labor movement and the mission was to drive the official discrimination out. We didn't stop the fight until the color clause was removed from every union's constitution or ritual. So officially there was no discrimination left in the trade union movement. But obviously there was discrimination left because it is run by American white people. I haven't found anything yet they run without discrimination--including the church.

So the national mission is still here. It will not be solved in my lifetime. But I still hope to make some contribution to it.

JH: I hope the same for you. Thank you for this interview.

Dellums: Thank you.

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William Strong
Benj. H. Swig
Louis A. Tabak
George L. Thomas
Richard M. Thomas
Clarence E. Todd
Matthew Taberner
Dr. Kazuo Togasaki
Mrs. Nion Tucker
Leo Vie
Meyer Weintraub
Don West
Helen Wheeler
Franklin H. Williams
Mrs. Josephine M. Williams
Dr. Thomas Wu
David Ziskind

(For special section of
Labor and Religious Leaders
see other side)

February 5, 1959

DEAR OFFICER:

Please note that I have received no negative reactions in regard to the bills which I called to your attention on January 22, 1959. If you have some, please send them in to me right away.

Enclosed are some additional bills which have already been introduced and which we may want to agree to support:

A.B. 346: By UHRUH - which is a general revision of the Sections of the Civil Code, prohibiting discrimination in public accommodations.

This goes further than either A.B. 155 or A.B. 204, which I previously sent you. However, it has since been replaced by UHRUH with a still more far-reaching bill, A.B. 594.

A.B. 594: By UHRUH and others: This revision of the Civil Code would in effect bar discrimination in almost any field of relationship, not just public accommodations. It adds schools, the purchase of Real Property, and Professional Services. It increases the penalty still further than provided for in A.B. 346.

A.B. 644: By Harton and Elliott: The major provisions of this bill makes discrimination grounds for suspension or revoking of a license to a real estate broker.

A.B. 890: By Hawkins and others. This is the basic bill to prevent discrimination in Publicly Assisted Housing, patterned after the New York State Law in the same field.

A.B. 1: This is a re-introduction of the bill to make it possible for aliens in the United States for twenty-five years or more to receive Old Age Assistance. This bill

TO OFFICERS:

Feb. 5, 1959

- 2 -

A.B. #1 - Continued

was vetoed by Governor Knight two years ago and has been a major concern of the CSO.

I would appreciate hearing from you on these bills before February 16, 1959, when representatives of various Inter-Group Relations, Agencies, will have a brief semi-annual meeting. I would like at that time to be able to indicate the attitude of the California Committee for Fair Employment Practices. So, by all means, if you have objections, please let me know.

If I do not hear from you, I will assume that you feel the above bills are our proper concern, with our support depending on questions of timing and the legislature's problems, rather than on the intent of the bill.

Fraternally yours,

William Becker

William Becker
Secretary

WB:s

oeiu-3-afl-cio

encc.

LABOR LEADERS:

GILBERT C. ANAYA, International Representative, United Steel Workers of America
 PETER A. ANDRADE, Director, Western Cannery Council, Teamsters
 SIGMUND ARYWITZ, Director Public Relations and Education, Pacific Coast ILGWU
 ROBERT S. ASH, Secretary, Alameda County Central Labor Council and Vice-President, California Labor Federation
 C. R. BARTALINI, President, California State Council of Carpenters
 W. J. BASSETT, Secretary-Treasurer, Los Angeles Labor Council; Vice-President, California Labor Federation
 CHARLES BIOLETTI, Regional Director, Reg. 6, United Automobile Workers
 ROY M. BROWN, National General Vice-President, International Association of Machinists
 JACK BRUHL, Vice-President, California Labor Federation
 HAROLD E. CHANDLER, Business Representative, Local 52, Laundry Workers International Union
 JOE W. CHAUDET, Typographical Union, Local No. 36
 J. L. CHILDERS, Business Representative, Alameda County Building Trades Council
 J. J. CHRISTIAN, Executive Secretary, Los Angeles Building Trades Council
 ROBERT R. CLARK, Assistant Director, District 38, United Steel Workers of America
 LUTHER M. DANIELS, Executive Vice-President, Service and Maintenance Employees, Local No. 399
 JOHN DIAL, Chairman, Fair Practices Committee, Greater Los Angeles Council, California Labor Federation
 MANUEL DIAS, General Vice-President, California Labor Federation
 SAM B. EUBANKS, Vice-President, California Labor Federation, San Francisco
 HARRY FINKS, Executive Secretary, Sacramento-Yolo Central Labor Council; Vice-President, California Labor Federation
 DANIEL V. FLANAGAN, AFL-CIO Director for California and Nevada
 EVERARD J. FRANKLIN, International Representative, UAW, CIO
 JOHN T. GARDNER, Vice-President, California Labor Federation, Los Angeles
 ROBERT GIESICK, Vice-President, California Labor Federation, Redding
 JACK GOLDBERGER, Business Manager, Newspaper Drivers Union, No. 921
 S. G. GOODMAN, Financial Secretary, International Association of Machinists, No. 311
 C. AL GREEN, Vice-President, California Labor Federation, Modesto
 ALBIN J. GRUHN, Vice-President, California Labor Federation, Eureka
 GEORGE HARDY, International Vice-President, Building Service Employees' Union
 ARTHUR K. HUTCHINGS, Executive Secretary, Gabriel Valley Central Labor Council
 GEORGE JOHNS, Secretary, San Francisco Labor Council
 PAUL L. JONES, Secretary-Treasurer, Construction & General Laborers, Local 304, and Vice-President, California Labor Federation, Oakland
 ALBERT T. LUNCFORD, Greater Los Angeles Council
 JENNIE MATYAS, International Vice-President, International Ladies Garment Workers Union
 C. T. McDONOUGH, International Vice-President, Hotel, Restaurant and Bartenders Union
 ROBERT J. O'HARE, Vice-President, California Labor Federation, Santa Monica
 PHILIP O'ROURKE, National Vice-President, American Radio Association
 SAMUEL OTTO, West Coast Director, International Ladies Garment Workers Union
 THOMAS PITTS, President, California Labor Federation
 WILLIAM POLLARD, General Organizer, Dining Car Cooks and Waiters
 JEROME POSNER, Manager, Los Angeles Joint Board, Amalgamated Clothing Workers
 HOWARD REED, Vice-President, California Labor Federation, Martinez
 WOODROW REDO, Vice-Chairman, Fair Practices Committee, Greater Los Angeles CIO Council
 J. J. (ROD) RODRIGUEZ, Business Representative, Butchers Union, No. 563
 CHARLES L. SMITH, Director, District 38, United Steelworkers of America
 JOHN SNIDER, President, District Lodge 727, International Association of Machinists
 PAT SOMERSET, President, State Theatrical Alliance, and Vice-President, California Labor Federation
 ISIDOR STENZOR, Manager, Los Angeles Cloak Joint Board, ILGWU
 THELMA THOMAS, Director, AFL Voters League, Los Angeles
 L. B. THOMPSON, Secretary-Treasurer, Los Angeles Local, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters
 EDWARD S. TURNER, National Vice-President, Seafarers International Union
 RONALD T. WEAKLEY, Business Manager, Local 1245, IBEW
 SPENCER WILEY, International Representative, United Auto Workers Union
 HERBERT H. WILSON, Vice-President, California Labor Federation, Los Angeles

RELIGIOUS LEADERS:

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 REV. HAMILTON BOSWELL, San Francisco
 RABBI ELLIOT M. BURNSTEIN, San Francisco
 REV. HOWARD C. BUSCHING, San Francisco
 REV. W. P. CARTER, Santa Monica
 REV. H. B. CHARLES, Los Angeles
 REV. DON M. CHASE, Crescent City
 REV. WILBUR CHOY, Stockton
 PROF. GEORGE H. COLLIVER, Stockton
 REV. NORMAN L. CONRAD, San Francisco
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 REV. FRANK CRANE, Los Angeles
 REV. D. C. CRUMMEY, Stockton
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 MOST REV. HUGH A. DONOHUE, San Francisco
 REV. DONALD FELLERS, Hughson
 RABBI ALVIN FINE, San Francisco
 REV. DR. HAROLD N. GEISTWEIT, Oakland
 RABBI JOSEPH B. GLASER, Ventura
 REV. HOWARD GREENWALT, Modesto
 REV. EMERSON G. HANGEN, Long Beach
 REV. MELVIN H. HARTER, San Diego
 WM. C. JAMES, Berkeley
 REV. CORRELL JULIAN, Exeter
 REV. ANDREW JUVINALL, Napa
 REV. EARL KERNAHAN, Anaheim
 REV. ROBERT KERSEY, Los Angeles
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 REV. DR. ROBERT PANZER, Sacramento
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 REV. GEO. LYON PRATT, Los Angeles
 RT. REV. JAMES A. PIKE, San Francisco
 REV. GALEN LEE ROSE, Sacramento
 REV. L. S. RUBIN, San Francisco
 REV. W. C. SAMPLE, San Mateo
 REV. ROBERT B. SANFORD, Willows
 REV. ISAIAH SCIPIO, JR., Los Angeles
 REV. JACK SHAFFER, Los Angeles
 REV. JOHN G. SIMMONS, North Hollywood
 REV. JOHN R. SPITLER, Berkeley
 RABBI WM. M. STERN, Oakland
 REV. NORMAN W. TAYLOR, South Gate
 REV. LAWRENCE C. THOMAS, Oakland
 REV. DR. DILLON W. THROCKMORTON, Tulare
 REV. ERNEST J. TROUTNER, Redding
 REV. GEORGE WARMER, JR., Oakland
 REV. CHARLES L. WARREN, D.D., Oakland
 REV. E. C. WASHINGTON, Sacramento
 REV. KENNETH WATSON, Tujunga
 RABBI SAUL E. WHITE, San Francisco
 REV. LEWIS A. WHITEHEAD, Modesto

MEETING OF OFFICERS
OF THE
CALIFORNIA COMMITTEE FOR FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES
SACRAMENTO -- MARCH 9, 1959 -- 8:00 A.M.

Present: Dellums, Blease (for Mrs. Duveneck), Colley,
 Zimmerman, Haggerty, Mont, Becker

Also: Williams, Pollard, Brandon, Howden, Shechter

RUMFORD reviewed the various amendments which had been suggested:

M/S/Carried: To maintain our position of no amendments with the understanding that we will accept, if offered by a member of the Senate Labor Committee, the Governor's amendments calling for:

Placing the FEPC Commission in the Department of Industrial Relations and making the Commission part-time, per-diem jobs instead of full-time on a salary.

M/S/Carried: To fight against the move to exclude Farm Labor.

The statements and amendments prepared by Howden and Francois were read by Howden. The previous decision to introduce no amendments on behalf this Committee was ruled to cover these, too.

The Employer amendments offered by Howland were rejected on the same basis.

On the question of an amendment to provide for the continued existence of the San Francisco FEP Commission, Howden reported that he had given it to Senator McAteer, who made no commitment to introduce it. It was generally felt that this amendment was not needed to keep the San Francisco Commission in existence and that the Board of Supervisors might kill it there, with or without the proposed amendment.

The question of the threat of a referendum by employer groups if FEPC were passed, or if it were passed without compromise amendments, was discussed.

M/S/Carried: To stay by our position of refusing to retreat because of this threat.

The question of the "MOBILIZATION" was raised and discussed. Most present felt it should be put on in a modified form.

The presentation of our position to the Senate Labor Committee by Rumford, Williams, Becker & Greenberg, Haggerty, Zimmerman and Dellums, was approved.

Sincerely,

WILLIAM BECKER, Secretary

CHAIRMAN, CALIFORNIA COMMITTEE FOR FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES
WEST COAST REGIONAL CHAIRMAN, N.A.A.C.P.
INTERNATIONAL VICE-PRESIDENT, BROTHERHOOD OF SLEEPING CAR PORTERS
TO THE CALIFORNIA SENATE LABOR COMMITTEE

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

It would give me a heavy heart to be called upon at this late date to try to convince legislators there is a need for legislation designed to afford all our citizens the right to compete for employment, based upon individual ability, and without discrimination because of race, creed, color, religion or national origin, but I feel certain that there is really no need to try to convince you of such a thing.

It seems to me that in a Democracy this right should be axiomatic, but my experience over the last forty years has taught me that even in a Democracy we need rules and regulations to restrain the prejudice, curb the bigots, and bolster those who want to do right but for various reasons need the backing of the law. Employment bias has gone unchecked in this state because no law has yet been enacted to curb this evil practice. This matter has gone too long unattended; it has given our state an uncivil reputation. We are placed in the ridiculous light of being a northern state, promoting the insufferable mores and traditions of Dixie.

The President of the United States ^{had to} faced this problem some 18 years ago and during this time some 16 states and around 50 cities have adopted legislation designed to eliminate it. No one denies that there is employment discrimination in California, the only disagreement seems to be on how to eradicate it. The moderate opponents say that they will be able to persuade employers to stop discriminating. We have learned ~~it~~, the hard way, that discrimination can not be eliminated by persuasion alone, since employers and Labor unions have been unable to persuade one another to stop discriminating after all these years of pleading. I have been active in the Labor movement for 33 years and during all that time, we haven't been able to persuade some of the Labor unions to stop discriminating.

Strong effective legislation is most definitely needed. I am quite well aware of how the Communists have used and are using racial and religious discrimination against our country, but in all these years I have never pleaded for equality and fair-play because of what discrimination was doing to us abroad. I have always felt that our democracy is worth protecting and perfecting on its merit. We have felt that discrimination should be eliminated because it is wrong, it is unchristian, and it is down-right evil. But, how can we afford to ignore the warning of the Vice-President of the United States who on returning from Africa, reported to the President, urging that discrimination be stopped. The vice-President pointed out that we cannot talk equality to the people of Asia and Africa while we practice inequality in the United States. There is no question but that the existence of discrimination against minority groups in the United States is a handicap in our relations with other countries. How can any American close his eyes to this?

The moral significance of Americans discriminating amongst themselves on any lines other than individual merit is basic. No man has the right to deny another, his rights as a human being. To make such a denial on the basis of race, creed, color, or national origin does not ease the gravity of the situation. It is wrong, there is no other way to look at it. Attempts at justification are hollow. Not much better than such attempts, is lip service, that is followed by little or no action.

F. E.P. has become not only a symbol of human dignity but a national reminder about democracy that we are always forgetting. It reminds us that every man has the right to a job that he can do. It reminds us also that no other man has the right to keep him from his job because of race, creed, or national origin. It reminds us that in America there should be no priorities, we should stand in line for the right to a job. It would send a lot of elbowing people back in line where they belong to take their turn as do others. It would announce to the greedy and stubborn bargainers who would trade democracy for racial power that our way of life is not for sale. And it is a good reminder. We can't do without it. For the louder men scream against it the more apparent is the need. It is the folks who break democracy's rules who

don't want democracy's policing. These men are the very people from whom Fair Employment Practices safeguards the whole nation. We believe that human beings have certain inalienable rights--that is, rights which can't be given or taken away, and that among these is the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Pursuit of happiness, without the right to a job, you may still have the right to pursue happiness but your ability to overtake it is certainly handicapped. The right to work is the right to live that is legally.

We have the unfinished task of democracy in industry. The reason the Fair Employment Practice Bill is so important, is because there is a basic respect for law in our culture. The cultural facts give law a significant roll in the educating and converting of the individual and the group. That in essence is why an F.E.P. law is so important. When we have such a law, however, some will dislike it, millions will feel a compulsion to obey. Law has a compulsive quality. Wherever we stand, all of us, we want the law on our side.

The moral fiber of society grows gradually. A law such as the F.E.P. law creates an atmosphere. It has a moral effect. It creates the conditions under which people are ashamed to act in an uncivilized manner.

Now let's take a brief look at who is in favor of effective F.E.P. legislation. It would require too much time to list all of the various churches and church groups that are on record in favor of this legislation. Two years ago there were so many church leaders present to testify that it even required considerable time just to introduce them and have them stand up. Therefore, I think it suffices to point out that everyone of our great religious denominations are on public record for it. Everyone of our minority racial and religious groups are for it, the Board of Supervisors of San Francisco have gone on record several times memorializing the state legislature to adopt effective Fair Employment Practice legislation and as recently as a few weeks ago. Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors adopted a motion memorializing the state legislature to pass the Fair Employment Practice bill in this 1959 session just a few weeks ago. The United California Labor

Movement is for it. The Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the Controller and the Attorney General all campaigned throughout the state with this legislation as a part of their platform last year and as you know all were elected. The Democratic party is on record for it, the Republican party is certainly not against it.

And now, just quite recently, the President of the United States who had by executive order set up an F.E.P. Committee on Government Contracts, with Vice-President Nixon heading it, realized that persuasion alone, won't do the job and called on Congress to give it a basis of law. And recently the California State Young Republicans meeting in Fresno adopted a resolution calling for the creation of a State Fair Employment Practice Commission by a vote of 140 to 29. ^{News papers} I have been unable to find anyone authorized to speak for any great mass of human beings that is against it. Now just then, who is left to oppose it? ^{For} Who do they speak ~~for~~? What do they represent?

It is our sincere belief that you must feel a strong compulsion to give the impetus of your committee's authority to our democratic processes and permit this measure to go to the floor, without weakening amendments, where it can be voted up or down by a cross section of the representatives of our citizenry.

There would be no advantage in voting for a bill which we know would not accomplish the purpose that we have, which is to eliminate racial, ^{and nationality} religious discrimination from the area of employment, I therefore, on behalf of the California Committee for Fair Employment Practice and its friends in general and for myself in particular, I plead with you gentlemen to give us the legislation we beg for.

I thank you.

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